# PAUL AND THE INTELLECTUALS

The Epistle to the Colossians

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# PAUL AND THE INTELLECTUALS

## The Epistle to the Colossians

*The Stone Lectures for 1926*

BY

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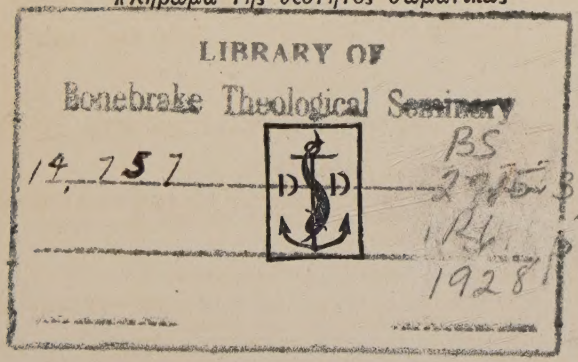
ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ
πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς

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PAUL AND THE INTELLECTUALS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO

WILLIAM OWEN CARVER

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND

FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS

# PREFACE

My long and deep interest in Paul goes back to the winter of 1885–6, when John A. Broadus threw the witchery of his wondrous personality about the Apostle in the New Testament English class in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Since that time Paul has been one of my heroes. I have read literally a library of books about him, but he is greater than all the vast number of books concerning him. It has been a fad with some men today to deride Paul and to explain his theology in terms of Pharisaic rabbinism or of Hellenism, including the mystery-religions.

Paul faced his world full-breasted and with no dodges or evasions. He was a man of transcendent intellectual powers and of fine scholastic training, a man of the schools. But he was no mere copyist of Jewish rabbi or of Greek philosopher. He did not hesitate to turn to his own use the language of the men whom he faced in conflict, if by so doing he could convey his meaning with more clearness and power. But Paul did not follow the Judaizers into ceremonialism or the Gnostics into philosophic stupidities. He had his faith and philosophy grounded in an unshakable experience with the Risen Christ. On this supreme fact he based his theology and his philosophy. He knew Jesus Christ. No new theory could upset him. So he brushed to one side the bondage of the Judaizers

with terrific blows, as seen in the Corinthian Epistles, Galatians, and Romans.

When Gnosticism lifted its head in the Lycus Valley Paul smote it, though a prisoner in Rome. He could not endure to see the glory of Jesus Christ obscured by the mist and fog of Gnosticism. The Epistle to the Colossians is the body blow against the early stages of this heresy that has never wholly disappeared. It appears today in various cults with high-sounding names that drink of the fountain of the Gnostic philosophy. The Epistle to the Colossians is a short one, but tremendous in its depth and height, its scope and grasp. Gnosticism is met also in Ephesians and in the Pastoral Epistles as in other New Testament writings, but to Colossians we must go to see Paul on fire on the subject.

The last letter that I received from my late beloved and revered friend, Dr. James Stalker, was under date of December 27, 1926, from Florence, Italy, in which he spoke with eagerness concerning the Stone Lectures which I had just delivered at the Princeton Theological Seminary, and which are now published in this volume. Dr. Stalker spoke of the "peculiar eagerness" with which he would "look forward to your Exposition of Colossians," for he thought the Germans had paid more attention to this Epistle than the British and the American scholars. He hoped that "the Universal Church" might somehow be more fully introduced "to the depth of St. Paul's thought." Surely that is a task great enough to challenge any man.

The substance of this volume was given before the Lane Theological Seminary of Cincinnati in February,

1927, and in November, 1927, as the Wilkenson Lectures before the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary of Chicago, as well as before Bible Conferences and churches. I do not entirely agree with Dr. Stalker, for certainly no German has in all points surpassed Lightfoot in his interpretation of Colossians. Peake (*Expositor's Greek Testament,* Vol. III, p. 493) thinks that "for close grappling with the thought of the Epistle it (Haupt's revision of Meyer) has no rival" and holds that "we still need in English a commentary of this kind, to unravel the thought of this most difficult Epistle." No single commentary can do all that is needed, but Peake himself produced a noble piece of work. There is room in English for many attempts to sound the depths of Paul's thought as he boldly faced the men who posed as the intellectual leaders of the day, and who sought to absorb Christ and Christianity into their world schemes and propaganda. Paul rightly foresaw a terrific conflict with this monstrous perversion of the facts of nature and of grace, but he did not falter for a moment as he met the graver issues involved that raised in an acute form the problem of the Person of Christ, the foremost theological issue of our own day and of all time.

The Greek words and more technical matters appear in the footnotes, so that those who do not know Greek may be able to read the body of the book without interruption. The text of Westcott and Hort is followed in the main, and I make my own translation.

A. T. Robertson.

Louisville, Ky.

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# PAUL AND THE INTELLECTUALS

## The Epistle to the Colossians

# CHAPTER I

## The New Heresy in the Lycus Valley

### 1. *Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea.*

The Lycus River flowed into the Maeander between two mountain ranges, the Cadmus (8,000 feet high) to the South, and the Mesogis (still higher) to the north. Laodicea lay between the Cadmus and the Lycus River, while across the Lycus to the north was located Hierapolis, a half dozen miles away. The two cities were in full view of each other. Nine miles further east right on the south bank of the Lycus stood Colossae with the cemetery on the north bank. Paul mentions all three cities in the Epistle to the Colossians (1:2; 2:1; 4:13, 15, 16). They were so close together that they were confronted with the same problems.

The location of Colossae seems clear, though the present gorge hardly corresponds to the subterranean stream for half a mile described by Herodotus (VII. 30). Ramsay surmises that Herodotus was misled by his reporter, or confused that idea with the *duden,* or lake, higher up the glen from which the river may come unless, indeed, the calcareous deposits once stopped the gorge for a while till flushed out (*Church in the Roman Empire,* pp. 472ff.).

Colossae is always called Phrygian, though Hierapolis is termed half Lydian, half Phrygian, while

Laodicea is sometimes assigned to Caria, more rarely to Lydia (Lightfoot, *Epistles of St. Paul to Colossians and Philemon,* p. 18). Hierapolis and Laodicea are on the western border of Phrygia while Colossae lies further to the east.

Hierapolis was a famous health resort, with medicinal baths in the streams. It was considered a sacred city as its name shows. Apollo was the patron deity here. The splendid ruins bear witness to the magnificence of this city. Here the priests of Cybele made the city the center of her mystic worship. These priests alone were considered immune from the mephitic vapor of the Plutonian or hot spring at Hierapolis. The scenery is very striking all around the city with the high cliffs of calcareous stone. There are rich mineral deposits in the valley and the mountains. From the waters were obtained precious mineral dyes (black, purple, scarlet) which gave the fine thick wool of the sheep a ready market like the fame of Thyatira. Inscriptions mention the guild of dyers as prominent in the life of Hierapolis. Wood (*Life, Letters, and Religion of St. Paul,* p. 317) comments on the fact that in A. D. 62, not far from the date of the Epistle to the Colossians, Epictetus was a young man in the city. And Lightfoot (*Comm.,* p. 13) indulges the thought that these two men met sometime, "the greatest of Christian, and the greatest of heathen preachers." But there is no proof of that, though Epictetus is the greatest citizen of Hierapolis.

Laodicea had also its guild of dyers and the inscriptions term it a metropolis. It was the chief city of all this region, very rich and populous (Rev. 3:17).

Cicero wrote some of his letters from Laodicea. It was destroyed by an earthquake (frequent in this region) in A. D. 60 according to Tacitus, A. D. 64 according to Eusebius, unless there were two earthquakes. Laodicea would receive no aid from the Roman Empire, but the city was rebuilt with her own wealth. The city had great trade, being located on the famous trade-route from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Paul wrote a letter to the church here (Col. 4: 16), and it is one of the seven churches of the Apocalypse of John (Rev. 3: 14). The city became the home of philosophers, rhetoricians, sophists. Great ruins today bear witness to its splendor. The church here became the victim of the worldly spirit (Rev. 3: 16).

Colossae was once a great and powerful city, but it went down in importance before the rise of the later rivals, Hierapolis and Laodicea. Herodotus calls Colossae a great city at the time of the Persian War (VII. 30), as Xenophon also so describes it (*Anab.* i. 2, 6), but by Strabo's time (XII. viii. 13) it was a small city. Colossae had had an illustrious history as Pliny termed it (H. N. v. 41), but that day had gone. Phrygians lived here with some Greek colonists and some Jews who had been brought in large numbers by Antiochus the Great from Babylonia to Phrygia and Lydia (Josephus, *Ant.* XII. iii. 4). Others came because of the rich trade on this great highway. Cicero (*pro. Flacc.* 28) mentions the *multitudo Judaeorum* in the district at this time. They had special privileges from Antiochus the Great. The Talmud (*Shab.* 147b) says: "The wines and the baths of Phrygia have separated the ten tribes from Israel." There are Jewish

traits in the Colossian heresy as we shall see. Colossae, says Lightfoot (*Comm.* p. 16), "was the least important church to which any epistle of St. Paul is addressed." But it is a great epistle and performed a greatly needed service. By 400 A. D. Colossae no longer existed as a city.

*2. Origin of the Church in Colossae.*

We know that Paul did not found this church or any other in the Lycus Valley. Epaphras had shown Paul their love (Col. 1:8), and thus he had heard of their faith (Col. 1:4). He plainly says (Col. 2:1) that he had not seen them: "I want you to know how great a struggle I am having for you and for those in Laodicea and for as many (others) as have not seen my face in the flesh." Though unknown to him by face he has a great yearning for them. It is probable that Epaphras was the minister who evangelized the Lycus Valley for Christ. In Col. 1:7 Paul says: "As you learned from Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant." The obvious meaning of that phrase is that they had learned the gospel in its original simplicity before the Gnostics came with their corrupt message. It is probable that Epaphras was a convert of Paul's ministry in Ephesus for three years, for we know that the message radiated from this capital city all over the Roman province: "so that all those who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). Demetrius complained to his guild of silversmiths that "not only in Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia this fellow Paul has persuaded and changed a considerable multitude" (Acts 19:26). It is hardly likely therefore

that Paul himself came to Colossae, for he said in his address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus that he had been in Ephesus "all the time" during those three years (Acts 20:18). He added (Acts 20:31): "For three years night and day I did not cease warning each one with tears." One wishes that a fuller record of this wonderful ministry in Ephesus existed. Paul associates "all the churches of Asia" in his greetings to the saints in Corinth (I Cor. 16:19). In the school of Tyrannus Paul disputed daily with all who came to hear him (Acts 19:10). Philemon lived in Colossae also and was probably one of those who heard Paul in Ephesus. Then there was Nympha(s) in Laodicea and probably also Archippus (Col. 4:15–17). But it was Epaphras who had preached first in the Lycus Valley after his conversion in Ephesus. Epaphras carried the burden of these churches at Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea on his heart (Col. 4:13). He it was who came all the way to Rome with this burden. It is even possible, probable according to the correct text in Col. 1:7 ("in our behalf" rather than "in your behalf")[1] that Paul had sent Epaphras from Ephesus after his conversion to Colossae as his "delegate or representative" (James Strahan in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church,* Vol. I, p. 226). Hence to Paul the Colossians were indebted for their knowledge of the gospel through Epaphras, "his delegate to them, his representative in Christ" (Lightfoot, *Comm.*, p. 29). It was by such agencies that Paul was able to say that the gospel was bearing fruit and growing in all the world (Col. 1:6). Gamaliel Bradford in his *D. L.*

[1] ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν instead of ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν.

*Moody* quotes Moody as saying: "It is the greatest pleasure of living to win souls to Christ, and it is a pleasure that angels can't enjoy." Paul knew this highest joy of life.

3. *The News Brought by Epaphras to Paul.*

What was it that Epaphras told Paul that so stirred his heart that he wrote this Epistle? He "showed"[2] Paul their love under trying conditions. Thus Paul "heard"[3] of their faith in Christ. As a result Paul is having an "agony"[4] of heart over the Colossians, Laodiceans, and others who had not seen his face. Epaphras is still "agonizing"[5] in behalf of them in his prayers that they may stand firm. Paul does not say in so many words who were the disturbers that had come to the Lycus Valley, though he does imply that there was a leader who tried to make spoil[6] of them. Evidently the peril was real and not imaginary. They used persuasive talk[7] that was calculated to lead astray[8] those not versed in the art of dabblers in philosophic language. It was plain to Paul that the "rough wolves"[9] whose coming he had foreseen had now come and that they were "not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). It was not merely out-siders who would speak "perverse things," but some from the group of elders of Ephesus or their followers would seek "to draw

[2] δηλώσας (1:8).
[3] ἀκούσαντες (1:4).
[4] ἀγῶνα (2:1).
[5] ἀγωνιζόμενος (4:12).
[6] ὁ συλαγωγῶν (2:8)
[7] πιθανολογίᾳ (2:4).
[8] παραλογίζηται (2:4).
[9] λύκοι βαρεῖς (Acts 20:29).

away"[10] the disciples after themselves. It is always amazing that the sheep will follow a wolf to their own destruction. Present-day Christianity has many illustrations of the peril confronting the Colossian Christians. Epaphras felt that Paul alone could cope with the peril at Colossae.

4. *The Reality of the Gnostic Peril.*

Paul had fought a long and hard fight with the Judaizers who sought to fasten Jewish ceremonialism on Christianity. The very existence of spiritual Christianity had been at stake. We see the story of this conflict in Acts 15 and in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Romans. There are echoes of the struggle in Philippians and in the Pastoral Epistles. Paul fought for freedom from the bondage of Jewish ritual and ceremonial legalism and won it. It is curious to see some modern scholars claiming Paul as a sacramentarian. That is a complete misconception of Paul's teaching. The Judaizers would have made Christianity a mere sect of Pharisaism.

But in Colossae there is a heresy of a different kind as Lightfoot shows in his really great discussion of "The Colossian Heresy" (pp. 71–111 in his *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*). He did not contend that Paul was opposing the fully developed Gnosticism of the second century but incipient Gnosticism that led directly to the complicated system known to Irenaeus and even to Ignatius. But Peake (*Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. III, p. 485) denies any form of Gnosticism as

[10] τοῦ ἀποσπᾶν (Acts 20:30).

being in Paul's mind: "It is certainly difficult to find full-blown Gnosticism mirrored in our Epistle. But it is also improbable that we have Gnosticism even in a rudimentary form." He undertakes to explain the Colossian heresy "from Judaism alone." There is a Jewish element in it beyond a doubt, but it is not wholly Jewish.

It is probable that Gnosticism had its origin in the oriental syncretism of the time. It was not purely Jewish, nor wholly Persian and Babylonian (Bevan, *Hellenism and Christianity,* p. 91). It is older than Christianity and not a product of Christian speculative theology. Probably its root goes back to the Persian-Babylonian syncretism as Niven argues (Hastings, *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church,* p. 455). I agree on this point with E. F. Scott (*The Apologetic of the New Testament,* p. 147): "There can be little doubt that the wave which culminated in the great Gnostic system had been long in gathering. Within the New Testament itself we have clear evidence of the beginnings of the new movement, and of the anxiety with which it was regarded by the leaders of the church. The later New Testament writings are hardly intelligible, unless we set them against the background of the rising heresy which had begun to overshadow the original tradition." Scott argues well against the fallacy of reading back from the second and third centuries into the first. The later Gnosticism developed so many mythologies and fads as to become complicated and difficult. It is a simple Gnosticism met here in Colossians. These early Gnostics sought salvation

by *gnosis* as well as by the mysteries (Rawlinson, *New Testament Doctrine of the Christ,* p. 67).

Gnosticism had no connection with Christianity in its own origin, but it sought by its Eastern myths and Greek philosophy to absorb the new faiths with which it came in contact. It had already assimilated some of Philo's ideas and Jewish apocalypticism. People were turning to the superstitious cults of the time and away from the old pagan gods and goddesses. The mystery-religions with their plans for redemption appealed to many as we see it in Mithraism, which came to challenge Christianity for its very life as a religion of redemption. The very claims of Christianity as a gospel of higher knowledge of Christ exposed Christianity to the Gnostic attacks: "Gnosticism claimed to be a religion for an intellectual élite" (Scott, *Apologetic of the New Testament,* p. 167). Niven (Hastings, *Dict. of the Apostolic Church,* p. 453) denies that Gnosticism prized intellectual knowledge as superior to faith. He holds that the Gnostics claimed rather to have a richer and fuller revelation than Christians. Certainly the later Gnostics did claim a superior revelation, but there was also a pride of knowledge which probably led to that contempt of others which so much stirred Paul to indignation (Scott, *ib.* p. 168). It is not easy to make "use of Gnosticism as a witness to pre-Christian paganism" (Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion,* p. 248).

This "knowledge falsely so-called" (1 Tim. 6:20) Paul meets not by appeals to ignorance or obscurantism. Paul is in no sense a reactionary. He is not opposed to intellectual culture. He is a man of the schools, cer-

tainly a student in Gamaliel's theological seminary in Jerusalem, and possibly a student in the University of Tarsus. Paul is in touch with the best in Jewish lore and shows points of contact with Greek learning. He quotes from Epimenides and Menander and Dr. J. Rendel Harris would add Aristophanes, Euripides, and Pindar. He knows the language of the Stoics. Paul was not afraid of the light of truth from any source whatever. Burgh (*Legacy of the Ancient World,* p. 284) notes that Christianity from the start had a capacity to enlist the intelligence in the service of faith, and was thus able to overcome Mithraism which developed no theology and sacred literature and which did not appeal to women. Mithraism was a mystery-religion with faith in a divine redeemer, with a hope of resurrection and with a sacramental union with the god Mithra by the blood-bath (*tauro-bolium*) for the initiate. All this was too "attenuated" and "often too external to touch the springs of conduct" (Angus, *Mystery-Religions and Christianity,* p. 142). The Mithraic redeemer had no historical existence and so vanished, a lesson for those who today deny the historical basis of Christ's life and work and who speak of the Christ-idea as the only thing worth while.

Paul opposes incipient Gnosticism by a plea for more knowledge, not less. All through Colossians he urges that they obtain "additional knowledge."[11] Kirsopp Lake (*Stewardship of Faith,* p. 145) calls Gnosticism "an illegitimate child of the Mystery-religions" and he thinks that "uninstructed Christianity" (Schmidt's *Vulgär Christentum*) did not give the Christology that

[11] ἐπίγνωσις (Col. 1:9, 10: 2:2).

became traditional (*ibid.* p. 170). But Paul did not get his ideas of Christ from the Gnostics (Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion,* p. 248). Paul did not hesitate to employ the language of the Gnostics for his own ideas, as he did with the Stoics and the Jewish rabbis, but he did not derive his ideas of Christ from the Gnostics. Paul did not hesitate to use "current phrases" (Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions,* p. 9). Paul knew his "Hellenistic environment." Hear Kennedy's conclusions (*ibid.* p. 299): "Our investigation has reached its limit. If it has accomplished anything, it has simply demonstrated afresh that in St. Paul we are confronted not with one of those natures which is content to be the medium of the spiritual forces of its environment, but with a personality which has been shaped once for all in the throes of a tremendous crisis, and thenceforward transforms every influence to which it is sensitive with the freedom born of a triumphant faith." That is a word fitly spoken by one of the modern masters on this subject.

Paul was not influenced by the Gnostics in any of his ideas about Christ. He took many of their terms like "mystery" and "fullness" and made them the vehicles of the expression of his own conceptions. He did not fear them nor did he despise them, but he exposed their heresies by a richer presentation of the truth in Christ. For this service we can be grateful. Fairbairn (*The Place of Christ in Modern Theology,* p. 82) says: "The Gnostics are the first theologians; their speculations are absurd enough as they lie, unfolded by the hand of the enemy, in the pages of

Irenaeus and Hippolytus; but they had a reason in them which the Fathers carefully have not allowed us to see. They attempted to translate the Christian history into an ethical cosmology." There may be an element of truth in Fairbairn's slap at Irenaeus and Hippolytus, for "Gnosticism is one of the most flexible designations in the vocabulary of the history of religion" (Kennedy, *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions,* p. 26). Irenaeus (*Ad Haer.* i. 29) says that in the second century the Gnostic errors multiplied like mushrooms out of the ground. It was peculiarly the heresy of the second century (Orr, *Neglected Factors in the Study of the Early Progress of Christianity,* p. 195), but its roots go back into the first century. Mansel (*Gnostic Heresies,* p. 49) thinks that Paul is condemning the pride of Gnosticism in 1 Cor. 8: 1, though that is hardly probable. But there is no evidence that Paul misunderstood Gnosticism or exaggerated the peril from its spread. "Paul has a gnosis or philosophy of religion which spanned heaven and earth" (Moffatt, *Paul and Paulinism,* p. 59) and he was not afraid to meet the pretentious Gnostics or Intellectuals in the open and on their own ground. Sir W. M. Ramsay dares to term Paul the greatest of all philosophers. In his grasp of the heart of the universe Paul has come nearer the real truth than Plato, Aristotle, or any of the moderns. Paul knew how to speak to the masses of men (1 Cor. 1:26–29) and at first Christianity took a firm hold on the industrial classes and the commercial centers, upon artisans and workmen (Burgh, *Legacy of the Ancient World,* p. 270). But surely Deissmann

goes too far in ranking Paul "with Amos, the herdman of Tekoa, and Tersteegen, the ribbon weaver of Mülheim" (*St. Paul,* p. 6): "St. Paul, the theologian, looks backward towards Rabbinism. As a religious genius St. Paul's outlook is forward into a future of universal history." Deissmann is anxious to condemn the modern theologians who look on Paul "as an obscurantist who corrupted the simple gospel of the Nazarene with harsh and difficult dogmas," "the dregs of doctrinaire study of St. Paul, mostly in the tired brains of gifted amateurs" (*ibid.* p. 4), but he does not do here justice to Paul's intellectual prowess.

Gnosticism left its mark on Christian theology for half a millennium (Angus, *Mystery Religions and Christianity,* p. 2), and is a peril today (Kullmann, *Theology and Life*). These Gnostics in the Lycus Valley were probably both Jewish and Gentile in origin and not merely Jewish as McGiffert thinks (*Apostolic Age,* p. 368). Sabatier (*Apostle Paul,* p. 219) thinks that this type arose in Jewish circles. Bevan (*Hellenism and Christianity,* pp. 59–88) discusses "the first contact of Christianity and paganism" in the Gnostic philosophy. "We may, I suppose, say that the questions raised by the study of Gnosticism and the things akin to it in the ancient world are those which at the present day probe most searchingly into the fabric of Christian belief" (*ibid,* p. 89). The contrasts between Christianity and Gnosticism are many as Bigg shows in his *Origins of Christianity* (chapter on Gnosticism). The Gnostic looked with abhorrence upon the earth and all its environment.

5. *The Nature of the Gnostic Peril.*

We may accept it as true that Paul did not rabbinize Christianity though he understood Judaism better than Montefiore is willing to admit (*Judaism and St. Paul*). Paul did not Hellenize Christianity as some carelessly claim, though he had points of contact with Greek culture. He did not adopt the mystery-religions though he understood their language. He is the protagonist and interpreter of early Christianity as it confronted Judaism and Hellenism. He is not the perverter of the simple gospel of Jesus, but the expounder of the Kingdom of God to the whole world, to men of thought as well as to simple artisans. In Colossians Paul faces the Gnostic heresy which is at bottom a false philosophy based on the notion that matter is evil. The Gnostic speculation concerned itself primarily with the origin of the universe and the existence of evil. That assumed that God is good and yet there is evil in existence. Their theory was that evil is inherent in matter. And yet the good God could not create evil matter. So they postulated a series of emanations, æons, spirits, angels that came in between God and matter. The idea was that one æon came from God, another æon from this æon, and so on till there was one far enough away from God for God not to be contaminated by the creation of evil matter and yet close enough to have power to do the work. By this fantastic philosophy these men satisfied their minds. One is bound to admit that they were easily satisfied. And yet John Stuart Mill contended that either the Creator, if there was one, was not all-good or not all-powerful. Men manufacture

men of straw and amuse themselves by knocking them down, as if a thing may not exist without one being able to explain it. The origin of evil remains unsolved, even though some blandly deny that sin exists, a mere notion of mortal mind. Paul seems to have Gnostics in mind when he condemns the "endless genealogies" (1 Tim. 1:4; Tit. 3:9). This bottom æon was called Demiurge in some systems and considered either ignorant of God or hostile to him. Some held that there were seven Demiurges concerned with cosmogony like the seven deities of the Perso-Babylonian religion.

When the Gnostics with this philosophy became interested in Christianity, they at once faced the problem of the Person of Christ. Some put Christ in the center of these æons, others at the bottom of the list. The Gnostics had a theory of a Saviour who rescued a fallen æon back to the *Pleroma* and out of the *Kenoma* into which it had fallen. The Christianized Gnostics interpreted Jesus Christ in the light of their philosophy and mythology. They did it in two different ways. The Docetic[12] Gnostics, so termed by Ignatius, denied the actual humanity of Jesus. He had only a phantom body and was wholly æon or angel. This form of Gnosticism is answered in 1 John 1:1, 3 and in 2 John 7. This idea was that the Christ took an apparent human form to reveal himself to one's sensuous nature. He was neither born nor did he die. His body was an illusion, not to say delusion. The other wing of Gnosticism is called Cerinthianism, from Cerinthus, its chief advocate in the later years of the first century and the great opponent of the Apostle John. This view denied

[12] From δοκέω to seem, appear.

the identity of Jesus and Christ. The man Jesus had his natural human life while the æon Christ came upon him at his baptism in the form of a dove and left him on the cross when Jesus exclaimed according to the so-called Gospel of Peter: "My Power, my Power, why did you leave me?" These Gnostic errors concerning the Person of Christ raised in an acute form Christological problems. Paul answers both forms of error by the true interpretation of the Person of Christ. The Cerinthian view reminds one of the modern Jesus or Christ controversy as shown in the Hibbert Journal Supplement in 1909: *Jesus or Christ.* One needs to keep before him the vagaries of these Gnostics about Christ to understand clearly Paul's language in Colossians. Paul finds in Christ all the Pleroma (Fulness) of the Godhead in bodily form (Col. 2:9). Hence the worship of angels is wrong and sinful.

But the Gnostic view of matter as essentially evil took a double turn on ethical problems. One wing argued for asceticism as the real escape from sin and sensuous things. Essenism had already forbidden certain kinds of food as well as marriage. Asceticism has always appealed to certain types as the way to piety. We see it in the Stoics, the Buddhists, the Monastic life of certain Christians today. Paul will expose the folly of treating the body as essentially sinful. The other wing took the extreme of antinomian license. The Nicolaitans and Ophites may be cited as examples of those who held that the way to overcome sensuality was to indulge it to excess, even to exhaustion, a curious anticipation of the Freudian folly seen in his psycho-analysis sex complex. Paul shows the tragic

folly of this view and the need of a clean life by the new man in Christ. These went to the extreme of licentiousness after the fashion of Epicureanism as the ascetic Gnostics followed the Stoics, only more so, with rites and ceremonies of supposed magic value.

Both the Pharisees and the Essenes had laborious rules for holy living, but the Essenes laid more emphasis on mysticism and blended easily with incipient Gnosticism such as appeared in the Lycus Valley. The Essenes prayed to the sun like the Parsee sun-worshippers. The Essene believed only in the immortality of the soul (no resurrection) like those of whom Paul spoke who held that the resurrection was already past.

In Colossians Paul gives us his full-length Portrait of Christ as Head of the Universe in nature and in grace. He unites in himself the Pleroma of the Godhead in bodily form. He had a real human body and shed his blood on the cross. "In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). The Gnostics depreciated Christ. Paul exalts him. "The Gnostic speculation had thus the effect of throwing the church back on its original tradition, and compelling it to realize the abiding value of the historical revelation in Jesus" (Scott, *ibid*, p. 179), "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Paul did not attempt to interpret Christ or Christianity apart from God, nor can it be done today. "I must be allowed to state my own personal conviction that apart from the recognition of a supernatural factor as having been at work, the beginnings of Christianity are not really to be explained, and that in the events which for us are represented by the New Testament

accounts of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus and of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit the Church rightly discovered the laying bare the arm of the Lord" (A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ,* p. 31). "It is to be noted further that Paul's teaching as to Christ's Person in the Epistle is not merely incidental to other teaching. It belongs to the warp and woof of the argument, and is formally and fully stated in order to show, by way of contrast with the speculative error he is opposing. just how we are to regard Jesus Christ in his relation to creation" (E. Y. Mullins, *Studies in Ephesians and Colossians,* p. 111).

## CHAPTER II

### The Author and the Readers

### 1: 1 and 2

1. *Paul*[1] *the Author.*

We have no anonymous epistles from Paul, unless the one to the Hebrews was written by him. The evidence against attributing the Epistle to the Hebrews to Paul is quite convincing. But the claim to Pauline authorship here in Colossians is not admitted by all scholars. Nothing is admitted by all scholars in history, theology, or science. Van Manen of Holland even denied that Paul ever lived, just as the historicity of Jesus has been denied by Arthur Drews of Germany, by J. M. Robertson of England, and by W. B. Smith of New Orleans. F. C. Baur admitted only four genuine Pauline Epistles (1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans), but the Tübingen school has small following now. More today deny the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles than any other of the four groups of Paul's Epistles (1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans; Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians; 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy). But the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles is stoutly defended by great names like Parry, Lock, Turner,

[1] Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

McNeile. The claim to authorship by Paul compels the acceptance of his authorship or pseudonymity, the use of his name by another.

The objections to the Pauline authorship are various, but none of them are really serious. It is said that Gnosticism did not appear till the second century and therefore Paul could not have written against it in the first century. But that objection overlooks the fact that incipient Gnosticism did exist in the first century and that Paul strikes it at the first contact with Christianity. Others urge that the Christology is too great an advance on Paul's previous epistles and shows that it is not genuine. But the only difference is that in Colossians Paul argues and proves the supremacy of Christ. The idea appears in the Corinthian Epistles and in Romans. In any case this objection assumes that Paul had to use the same terms without growth or expansion called for by immediate needs. The Headship of Christ over his Body (the church) appears in 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Romans 12:5. The power of the Cross dethrones the Law as well as the spirit-world (Col. 2:14 and 15), but that idea is in Galatians 3:13, 19 (Maurice Jones, *Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians,* p. 5). It is further objected that the language employed in Colossians is un-Pauline. This objection overlooks the fact that style is partly a function of the subject. Vocabulary varies largely with the theme discussed. M. Jones (*Op. cit.,* p. 7) notes that the word for righteousness[2] does not appear in 1 Thessalonians and only once in 1 Corinthians, while

[2] δικαιοσύνη.

cross[3] is absent from Romans, and law[4] is not found in 2 Corinthians. He aptly quotes a paragraph from Mahaffy's *Silver Age of the Greek World* concerning Xenophon which is to the point: "Xenophon's later tracts are full of un-Attic words, picked up from his changing surroundings, and, what is more curious, in each of them there are many words used by him only once, so that on the ground of variation of diction each single book might be, and indeed has been, rejected as non-Xenophontic. . . . Now of classical writers Xenophon is perhaps (except Herodotus) the only man whose life corresponds to St. Paul's in its roving habits, which would bring him into contact with the spoken Greek of varying societies." It is a wooden and one-sided criticism that is unable to see this. What is true of differences in vocabulary is true also of style. In the first two chapters of Colossians the sentences are long and involved. Thoughts pile up upon one another as Paul answers the Gnostic depreciation of Christ. But we see a similar situation in 2 Corinthians 5 and 7 and in Romans 8 as well as in Ephesians 1 to 3. It is plain that Paul is greatly moved by the Gnostic peril in the Lycus Valley. His very style reflects the intensity of his passion for Christ. This Epistle is "profound and difficult" (Ellicott), but it is Pauline to the core.

Baur even accuses the author of the Epistle to the Colossians with being influenced by Gnosticism and therefore not Paul. But that is wholly to misunderstand the language of the Epistle which unmercifully

[3] σταυρός.
[4] νόμος.

lays bare the flagrant errors of the incipient Gnosticism which it opposes. Paul takes some of the terms of the Gnostics like Fulness[5] and uses them for his conception of the Person of Christ.

There are anacolutha in Colossians as in all of Paul's Epistles. There are long sentences as in Colossians 1:9–20; 2:8–12, but note them in Romans 1:1–7; 2:5–10, 14–16; 3:23–26; Galatians 2:3–5, 6–9; Philippians 3:8–10. "The series of relatives in 1:13–22 and 2:10–12 is remarkable, but not without parallel" (Abbott, *Epistle to the Colossians,* Int. Crit. Comm., p. liii).

The Epistle to Philemon is accepted as genuine today by nearly all scholars. If Philemon is Pauline, Colossians is also. The same persons appear in both and the tone is the same. In view of all the known facts today it is not the mark of an open mind for one to deny the Pauline authorship of Colossians. Philemon is a purely personal letter and not a formal epistle, but the Epistle to the Colossians was designed to be read in church (Col. 4:16) and is a real epistle in spite of Deissmann's contention to the contrary (*Light from the Ancient East,* 1910, p. 225). There are personal items in chapter 4, but these do not change the fact. Colossians is not a literary or artificial production, but a church epistle for real and public use. One does not think of Paul as writing for posterity. He wrote for real needs.

Paul calls himself "apostle of Christ Jesus"[6] as he always does save in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, in Philip-

[5] πλήρωμα.

[6] ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

pians and in Philemon. The Judaizers challenged Paul's apostleship and so he mentions it in the great doctrinal epistles (1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans). In the Pastoral Epistles it is obviously pertinent. The Gnostics also would challenge the authority of any one outside of their cult. So Paul properly calls attention to his rank and right to speak as a protagonist of true Christianity against the Gnostic heresy. In the earlier epistles Paul usually says "Jesus Christ" and in the Pastoral Epistles "Christ Jesus." By that time "Christ" is no longer regarded as a verbal adjective, Anointed, but as a proper name on a par with Jesus. In Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians both orders occur indifferently.

But Paul takes pains here to affirm as in Galatians 1:1 that he is apostle of Christ Jesus "by the will of God,"[7] not by man. He was not one of the Twelve, but was on a par with them. Paul laid no claim to ecclesiastical authority. Ellicott (*Comm.*, p. 16) observes that "an interesting paper might be written on these peculiarities of designation," the various terms used by Paul in describing himself in the beginning of his epistles. He is not ashamed of being the bond-slave of Christ with the chain upon his right hand, but he does not allow his "bonds" (Col. 4:18) to weaken his sense of authority as apostle of Christ Jesus. He has no doubt about God's hand in his life. It is probably a hearty recognition of God's grace to him and "a renunciation of all personal worth" (Lightfoot). God had made him what he is. "Notice the blending of

[7] διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ. Definite without article. Note preposition and genitive.

lowliness and authority in Paul's designation of himself" (Maclaren, *Expositor's Bible*).

Paul associates Timothy with him in the greeting, but with no idea that he is in any sense the author. He associates Timothy likewise in 2 Cor. 1:1; Philemon 1; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1 as he did Sosthenes in 1 Cor. 1:1. In Galatians 1:2 Paul associates "all the brethren with me." He calls Timothy "the brother,"[8] but without official position involved. It is simple brotherhood that Paul has in mind. He loved Timothy and rejoices in his presence.

*2. And from Rome.*

It used to be taken for granted that Paul was in Rome when he wrote the third group of his epistles (Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians). That is still true in my judgment. But various views are now held by different men. In 2 Cor. 11:23 Paul speaks of being "in prisons more abundantly." We know of only one imprisonment before Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, that in Acts 16:23 at Philippi. But the language in 1 Cor. 15:32 and 2 Cor. 1:8 and 9 may mean that he was in prison at Ephesus about the time of the riot or before, though it could refer to a serious illness. In the ruins of Ephesus there is "a Greek tower forming part of the line of fortifications of the ancient city, which is called St. Paul's Prison" (M. Jones, *Ep. to the Col.*, p. 16). And then the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* speaks of an imprisonment of Paul at Ephesus. Once again in the "Monarchian Prologues" it is stated that Paul wrote to the Colossians from

[8] ὁ ἀδελφός.

Ephesus. Deissmann (*Light from the Ancient East*, 1910, p. 229) argues for Ephesus as the place where Paul was imprisoned when he wrote Colossians and Ephesians. Haupt argues that it is not possible for Philippians and Colossians to be written from the same imprisonment. Some argue that all four were written from Ephesus, others that only Philippians belongs there, others that only Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians came from there. But Paul could have been a prisoner in Ephesus without writing epistles while there. He was a prisoner in Caesarea and wrote no epistles while there, so far as we know, though Meyer, Weiss, and Haupt argue for Caesarea as the place where Colossians was written. Haupt holds that the only way to accept these four epistles as genuine is to put the three at Caesarea and Philippians at Rome. It is true that Paul is joyous in Philippians, but he had ample reason for that with such a glorious church in mind. The problems in Colossians and Ephesians give a different tone and color to Paul's writings and naturally so. Certainly the presence of Luke and John Mark with Paul (Col. 4:10, 14) argues for Rome as they were not with him in Ephesus. The reasons for Rome as the place where Colossians was written remain unanswered. So we may think of Paul in Rome when Epaphras came to him and when Onesimus was led to Christ.

3. *Sent Along with the Epistles to Philemon and to the Ephesians.*

This is beyond speculation since Paul expressly says that Tychicus and Onesimus will make known more fully than he has written in Colossians all the things

about his situation in Rome (Col. 4:7–9). Onesimus was sent back with the little letter to Philemon (verses 10 and 13). Tychicus is the bearer of the Epistle to the Ephesians as we now call it (Eph. 6:21f.). So then Onesimus is mentioned as the messenger of Paul in both Philemon and Colossians, while Tychicus is named in Colossians and Ephesians. We are compelled, therefore, to think of these three Epistles as carried at the same time by the two messengers Tychicus and Onesimus. We do not know that all three were written on the same day, but they were sent at the same time. The Epistle to Philemon is wholly personal concerning Onesimus, the converted runaway slave, and does not deal with the great doctrinal issues raised in Colossians and Ephesians. It could have been written either just before or just after Colossians and Ephesians, and was probably written in Paul's own hand, the natural meaning of verse 19. Even Renan holds that Paul alone could have written "ce petit chef d'oeuvre." "In the whole range of literature there is no piece which bears more unmistakably the stamp of originality and genuineness" (Abbott, *Int. Cont. Comm. on Col.*, p. lviii).

The precise relation between Colossians and Ephesians is not clear. If the Epistle to the Laodiceans mentioned in Colossians 4:16 is our Ephesians, as is most likely true (a general letter to the churches of Asia preserved for use by the church in Ephesus), then Paul either already had written that letter before dictating the one to the Colossians, or he had it plainly in mind to write it. Either alternative will suit Paul's language in Colossians 4:16, where Paul urges an

exchange of the letters by the two churches so near to each other. We are left to our wits to decide which Paul wrote first, Colossians or Ephesians. In itself one may think that Colossians would come first inasmuch as Epaphras came from Colossae to see Paul about conditions there. The Epistle is in direct response to this appeal of Epaphras, as Paul makes plain (Col. 1:4, 8; 2:1; 4:12). With his mind ablaze over the great issues involved Paul dictates the Epistle and adds his signature at the close (Col. 4:18). Who Paul's amanuensis was we do not know. He may have been Timothy (Col. 1:1) or Aristarchus (4:10) or even Luke, in spite of Paul's praise (4:14). He lets Tertius say that he was the amanuensis in Romans (16:22). Apparently while still stirred over the problem raised by incipient Gnosticism in the Lycus Valley, Paul dictates the letter which we know as to the Ephesians, though the two oldest Greek manuscripts (the Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus) do not have the words "in Ephesus." The unusual resemblance between the Epistles to the Colossians and to the Ephesians has been interpreted in different ways. The fact is beyond dispute. There are 155 verses in Ephesians and 54 of them show likenesses to Colossians. M. Jones (*Op. cit.*, p. 9) puts the matter sharply: "This profusion of identical words, compounds, phrases, grammatical forms, relatival clauses that we find in both Epistles, as well as the marked similarity in the structure of paragraphs and in the length and elaboration of sentences, point unmistakably to one of two conclusions: they must either both be the work of one and the same author, or the writer of the one must have borrowed

on a large scale from the work of the other." Some modern scholars admit the Pauline authorship of Colossians, but reject the genuineness of Ephesians and consider it a second century copy of Colossians. Still others refuse to accept either of them as Pauline. M. Jones observes (*Op. cit.*, p. 10) that "the innumerable words and phrases which are common to both letters are hardly ever found associated with the same train of thought in the two." This is a remarkable fact and argues strongly against the idea that a second-century writer has copied Colossians in Ephesians. It seems inevitable that we conclude that the same writer has used his own material freely in the two letters. There is identity of authorship and of literary individuality. It is not like Luke or Matthew making use of Mark's Gospel. Unity of authorship alone explains all the phenomena, and Pauline authorship at that.

The difference between the two Epistles is not confined to literary matters. In Colossians Paul presents Christ as the Head. He exalts Jesus Christ while the Gnostics degraded him. In Ephesians Paul exalts the Church as the Body of Christ the Head, while the Gnostics dragged down the ideal of the Christian life by their views of matter as essentially evil. The two Epistles thus complement and supplement each other. Paul wished the churches at Colossae and Laodicea to read both of them in order to get his full-length portrait of Christ and of Christ's Body (Col. 4:16). Dr. Stalker used to say that Ephesians is the profoundest book ever written. It reaches heights not surpassed anywhere. Paul has in Ephesians 1 to 3 expanded the ideas in Colossians 1 and 2 on a larger scale. M. Jones

(*Op. cit.*, p. 12) thinks that the solitude of Paul's prison life in Rome gave him "an unexceptionable opportunity of realizing that there were depths in the divine scheme of salvation that he had not yet plumbed, and that many an idea to which he had given expression in his earlier preaching and writing required further development if he was to do justice to the Christian revelation in all its richness and comprehensiveness." The closing verse in Romans 11 shows us how helpless Paul felt as he gazed into the abyss of God's redemptive love and purposes. In Colossians and Ephesians Paul rises to the full height of his intellectual powers as he outlines his philosophy of a Christo-centric universe. This Pauline philosophy appeals to every thoughtful Christian as the true philosophy. It is the masterful conception of a universe created by Christ and sustained in Christ that leads Sir W. M. Ramsay to call Paul, as already stated, the greatest of all philosophers, the truest and that is the greatest. As a matter of fact the same lofty view of Christ appears in Philippians 2:6–11 that we have in Colossians and Ephesians. Deissmann (*Light from the Ancient East*, 1910, p. 230) argues that Paul naturally uses the same arguments in Colossians and Ephesians because he is "a missionary sending letters simultaneously to two different churches that he is anxious to win."

4. *Written About A. D. 63.*

If Paul was in Rome, as we have decided, when he wrote and sent to the Lycus Valley Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians (Laodiceans), then the date belongs to the first Roman imprisonment. Scholars disagree

again concerning the fact of the second Roman imprisonment when he wrote the Pastoral Epistles. But, leaving to one side in this argument the question of two Roman imprisonments, he wrote Colossians while a prisoner in Rome. This fact fixes the date within the years A. D. 59 to 64, even if he met his death in A. D. 64 as I do not believe.

The question arises, if Philippians also belongs to this Roman imprisonment, whether it comes before or after the group of three. There is, to be sure, nothing conclusive one way or the other on this point in any of the Epistles. He faces death more pointedly in Philippians 1:19–26, but he expects to be set free (Phil. 1:25), and in Philemon 22 he actually asks for a room to be reserved for his coming. There is a more jubilant note in Philippians in spite of looking death squarely in the face, but the Philippians had made Paul very happy by their great kindness in sending Epaphroditus to Rome with so many expressions of good-will. The usual theory is that Philippians was written after Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians and towards the close of the stay in Rome, in order to allow plenty of time for the Philippians to communicate with Paul. Lightfoot, on the other hand, argues that Philippians comes before the other three chiefly on the ground of its greater kinship with the great doctrinal Epistles (1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans). There seems a slight echo of the Judaizing controversy in Philippians 1 and 3. There is no echo of the Gnostic controversy in Philippians, though the great Christological passage in 2:6–11 lays a broad foundation for the high Christology of Colossians and Ephesians. Since there is

nothing to conflict with this dating of Philippians, we may assume that Colossians along with Ephesians and Philemon comes toward the close of the first Roman imprisonment. A. D. 63 will suit as well as any other year.

5. *The Readers.* 1:2.

Lightfoot notes that in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Paul addresses the church or churches. In Romans, Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians he addresses "the saints."[9] Abbott thinks that the term "saints" gives "a more personal colouring" to the Epistle, addressed to individuals rather than to the body. The word is probably a substantive rather than adjective, and is applied to all the members of the church. The idea of consecration is meant by the word though it comes to be applied to all believers whether specially "saintly" or not. Even the church in Corinth with all their weaknesses are "called saints" and "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:2). Lightfoot thinks, however, that by the addition of "the faithful[10] brethren in Christ Paul gives a hint that by "saints" he means only those who are loyal to Christ and who have not yielded to the blandishments of the plausible Gnostics. Peake sees only the sense of "believing" here, but true and steadfast in Christ seems to be the idea. The papyri in Egypt give frequent examples of the use of the word "brothers" in the various trade guilds and other organizations. "In Christ" can be taken with

[9] τοῖς ἁγίοις.
[10] τοῖς πιστοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ.

both "saints" and "brethren" as only the one article is employed. These saints and brothers are in Colossae, not a large city and probably not a strong church, but the cause was in peril and that is enough for Paul's interest to be aroused.

6. *The Greeting.* 1:2.

It is very simple and short here without the addition of Jesus Christ after "Our Father." So it is alone in Paul's Epistles except 1 Thessalonians. The use of grace and peace[11] together occurs in all the Pauline Epistles save in the Pastorals. In 1 Thessalonians 1:1 we have only "grace and peace." Scribes here and in Colossians 1:2 often added the usual words about the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no richer word in the New Testament than "grace." It is the distinctive word along with truth of the work of Christ (John 1:17). It is so full of meaning that one despairs of defining it. See 2 Corinthians 9:15 where gratitude is expressed to God in his gift of Christ though another word is used (*dorea*). Peace can be had in Christ even in the midst of war. And if men had more of the grace of Christ, they would have more real peace in heart and life. It is just as true of nations as of individuals.

[11] χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη.

## CHAPTER III

### The Grounds for Gratitude

### 1:3–8

1. *Paul's Gratitude Real.*

Gratitude follows greeting in all of Paul's Epistles save in Galatians where vehement denunciation takes its place. There is, no doubt, "a certain conventional element in these greetings" (Peake, *Exp. Gr. Test.*, Vol. III, p. 496), but there is more than mere convention. It was a habit with Paul to express gratitude for blessings, a splendid habit for all, but Paul "was overjoyed when he got good news" from the Colossians (Gross Alexander, *Colossians and Ephesians,* p. 12). The papyri letters show the conventionality beyond a doubt, but even in those examples one finds many a heart-ache if he reads between the lines, as all letters should be read. Paul uses the literary plural, "we give thanks,"[1] as he often does. It is possible that he is thinking of Timothy also, "I and Timothy," as Ellicott thinks. But he reverts to the singular in 1:24; 2:1, 4; 4:18. It is not necessary to say that Paul never included others in his use of the plural, but only that he did not always do so. See Milligan's sensible discussion, "Did Paul Use the Epistolary Plural?" (*St.*

[1] εὐχαριστοῦμεν compound word, εὖ and χάρις.

*Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians,* pp. 131 and 132). In Colossians 4:18 "the salutation of me Paul in my own hand" he clearly assumes sole responsibility for the authorship. He apparently says "I" or "we" without necessary distinction between them. The word used is common in late writers and in inscriptions, but it is in the papyri[2] and in the Old Testament Apocrypha. In the classic Attic it does not appear, but its oldest use seems to be to do a good turn to, to return a favor, to be grateful. The notion of expressing gratitude, as here, seems to be confined to writers from the time of Polybius onwards (Lightfoot, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul,* p. 9).

2. *To God in Prayer.* 3.

Paul's language [3] is unusual, "to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The same idiom[4] occurs in 3:17, "giving thanks to God the Father through him." The evidence is conclusive for this reading without "and" in 3:17. It is probably correct also in 1:3, Neutral and Western classes against Alexandrian and Syrian. The usual form is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31). Paul did not hesitate to use "God of our Lord Jesus Christ" as Jesus himself did to Mary Magdalene (John 20:17), and as Paul expressly says in Ephesians 1:17: "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." This language is not a denial of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The

[2] See Deissmann, *Light,* etc., p. 168, "a thoroughly Pauline way of beginning a letter" with *εὐχαριστῶ.*

[3] *τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.* Real dative case. The absence of the article with *πατρὶ* causes no trouble.

[4] *εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ τῷ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ.*

use of "Lord"[5] with "Jesus Christ" shows the high sense of the term here, not a mere deferential epithet. Jesus Christ[6] stands on the same plane with God the Father.

Probably "always"[7] belongs both to "give thanks" and to "praying."[8] "We give thanks for you always when we pray for you." Note Eph. 1:16 for the unceasing gratitude in his prayers. "For you"[9] is to be taken with "always" and the phrase colors both the verb and the participle. Maclaren (*Expositor's Bible*, p. 21) notes an apparent confusion in the long sentence (Col. 1:3–8), a sort of prelude to the definite petitions in 1:9–20, due to the variety of subjects introduced. "But a little thought about it shows it to be really a remarkable specimen of the Apostle's delicate tact, born of his love and earnestness." "Before he warns and rebukes, Paul begins by giving the Colossians credit for all the good which he can find in them." One wonders if Paul had prayer-lists, for he carried these and other saints in his heart always to the throne of grace.

3. *News of the Faith and Love and Hope of the Colossians.* 4 and 5.

Paul's gratitude to God grows out of the good news which he has heard[10] about them from Epaphras (1:8).

[5] κυρίου.

[6] Westcott and Hort bracket Χριστοῦ because B does not have it. The word is surely genuine here.

[7] πάντοτε.

[8] εὐχόμενοι. Simultaneous action with the verb.

[9] περὶ ὑμῶν.

[10] ἀκούσαντες. Aorist twice here expressing action antecedent to the principal verb εὐχαριστοῦμεν. The aorist participle often expresses simultaneous action, never subsequent action.

This temporal participle gives the ground for thanksgiving. He had heard of "your faith in Christ Jesus."[11] The "faith in Christ Jesus" is a definite conception. See the same idiom in Ephesians 1:15. Their faith moved in the sphere of Christ Jesus. See 2 Timothy 1:13. It is more than fidelity,[12] the internal trust in Christ, "Christ-centred faith" (Ellicott), one of the great words of Christianity.

But Paul had heard also of "the love which you have[13] towards all the saints." This "love"[14] is the love of choice and more than mere "friendship."[15] It is employed in the New Testament of the spiritual bond between God and man and between man and man in Christ, "which is characteristic of Christianity" (Abbott-Smith, *Manual Lexicon*). But both words are employed in noble senses in the New Testament. This Christian love is directed "toward all the saints."[16] Paul conceives the real unity of all the saints in Christ. Faith in Christ as Messiah brings fellowship with one another and overleaps all bounds of race or nation, class or sex. Faith and love are the roots from which grows this noble tree. Their love for one another grew out

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[11] *τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.* No article before the adjunct *ἐν* Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, but it is clearly construed with *πίστιν*.

[12] It is not best to stress unduly the difference between *ἐν* and *εἰς*, really the same root and essential idea.

[13] *ἣν ἔχετε.* Probably correct text, though B does not have it. The Syrian or Byzantine class reads *τὴν* for *ἣν ἔχετε* (cf. Eph. 1:15). ℵ A C D* Old Latin Vulgate Bohairic have *ἣν ἐχετε* (cf. Philemon 5).

[14] *τὴν ἀγάπην.* Common in the Septuagint. Doubtful example in papyri and inscriptions (Deissmann, *Light*, etc., p. 70).

[15] *φιλία.* From *φίλος*. Probably *ἀγάπη* is the nobler word, *φιλία* the warmer.

[16] *εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους.*

of their faith in and love for Christ. "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). The Colossians had given Paul proof of the reality of their religion.

But Paul brings in the other members of this "triad of Christian graces" (Lightfoot), "because of the hope which is stored up for you in heaven."[17] It is not perfectly plain whether this phrase is to be connected with "we give thanks" at the beginning of the sentence or with "faith" and "love" just before. It is true that it could not very well come in any sooner and it makes good sense as the reason for Paul's gratitude about the Colossians and it is a more unselfish view of their love to take it with Paul's gratitude than to make the love depend on the reward for it in heaven. Lightfoot argues strongly for the connection with faith and love because of a like connection in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 "your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope." And one thinks also of 1 Corinthians 13:13 "faith, hope, love." Lightfoot adds: "Faith rests on the past; love works in the present; hope looks to the future." This is the way that the Greek commentators and most modern men look at it. Peake interprets it "of the love which is due to the hope of a heavenly reward." But Abbott, however, insists on the connection with "give thanks" since "hope" is here objective as in Romans 8:24 and Galatians 5:5 and not subjective as in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 1 Corinthians 13:13. It is

[17] *διὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀποκειμένην ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.* Clear dative of interest *ὑμῖν.* The participle *ἀποκειμένην* though present passive is really perfective in idea from the meaning of the verb *κεῖμαι* and the preposition. See it also in Luke 19:20 of the talent laid away in a napkin and in 2 Tim. 4:8 of Paul's crown of righteousness.

a nicely balanced point. There is an element of truth in each view. "The hope laid up in heaven is not the deepest reason or motive for faith and love, but both are made more vivid when it is strong. It is not the light at which their lamps are lit, but it is the odorous oil which feeds their flame" (Maclaren). Certainly Jesus urged men to lay up treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:20; Luke 12:34; 18:22). "The hope laid up for you in heaven" is the thing hoped for rather than the act of hope.[18] This blessed hope cheered Paul in his own life (2 Tim. 4:8), and is a mainspring in consecrated living (Rom. 8:24).

This hope is not a new idea for the Colossians, "which you heard before in the message of the truth of the gospel which came to you."[19] He probably refers not to the time before he wrote this letter or to the hope before its fulfilment, but to the first hearing of the gospel message at the hands of Epaphras. It was the gospel that he preached and it was the truth, not the heresies of the Gnostic teachers who had recently come among them. The preaching of Epaphras Paul calls the message of truth, marked by the truth in contrast with the wild fancies of the Gnostics. This message was the gospel, the good news of salvation through Christ. In Galatians 1:6–9 Paul denies that the mes-

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[18] Bengel says: "ex spe patet quanta sit causa gratias agendi pro dono fidei et amoris."

[19] ἣν προηκούσατε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς. The chief idea here is τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (note τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου in 1:23). It is the genitive of content with τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀληθείας (descriptive genitive with λόγῳ). The word ἀλήθεια is interesting (λανθάνω and α-privative). See Rom. 1:18 and Gal. 2:5, 14. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:15 ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας "cutting straight the word of truth."

sage of the Judaizers was a gospel at all. He means a like denial of the Gnostic teaching. There is no real gospel which denies the grace of God by faith in Christ, or which dethrones Jesus Christ from his place of supremacy. Paul means "the true and genuine gospel as taught by Epaphras, and not the spurious substitute of these later pretenders" (Lightfoot).

4. *The Spread of the Gospel in the Roman World.* 6.

The verse division has separated "which has reached you"[20] from verse 5. Fortunately for Paul he had none of our modern verses for his long sentence. The gospel has come to the Colossians "as also in all the world,"[21] "a very natural and intelligible hyberbole" (Ellicott). Probably the Roman world would satisfy this language as that in Acts 17:6 and in 1 Thessalonians 1:8, but it is not necessary to limit the horizon too closely, or to understand it with minute exactness. It is undoubtedly true that the gospel had spread over the world more rapidly and more widely than most people today imagine. In the Acts of the Apostles we get only one section of the activity of the early Christians. "More lurks under these words than appears on the surface. The true gospel, the Apostle seems to say, proclaims its truth by its universality. The false gospels are the outgrowths of local circumstances, of special idiosyncracies" (Lightfoot). Paul evidently seeks to widen the horizon of the Colossians that they may not fall victims to the blandishments of the local

[20] τοῦ παρόντος εἰς ὑμᾶς. Cf. Acts 12:20 for παρεῖναι πρός. For εἶναι εἰς see Luke 11:7.

[21] καθὼς καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ. See Rom. 1:8 ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ.

Gnostics. But he adds two items of interest. The gospel "is bearing fruit and is growing" [22] in all the world "as also among you." [23] "The gospel is not like those plants which exhaust themselves in bearing fruit and wither away. The external growth keeps pace with the reproductive energy" (Lightfoot). The gospel bore two marks. "It is fruitful and it spreads" (Maclaren). It was filling all the world, as Jesus had said it would, like the grain of mustard seed that would become a tree. The gospel has inward energy and it gathers new converts over the world (Peake).

The gospel in Colossae has had a continuous progress from the start, "from which day[24] (or since) you heard and recognized[25] the grace of God in truth." [26] The Colossians both heard and recognized the grace of God. Many hear who go no further, but the Colossians "had apprehended in its true sense as a message of the free grace of God, and not a system of outward observances and of self-imposed asceticism, such as the false teachers were trying to introduce" (Gross Alexander).

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[22] *ἐστὶν καρποφορούμενον* (only example of the middle voice; see active in 1:10). "The middle denotes the inherent energy, the active, the external diffusion" (Lightfoot.) A periphrastic present indicative unless a comma is put after *ἐστὶν*, hardly likely. *καὶ αὐξανόμενον* carries the figure of growth, "metaphor from trees or arborescent plants" (Ellicott).

[23] *καθὼς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν.* Note the double use of *καθὼς*, the comparison doubling back on the Colossians, a sort of afterthought of the apostle to give praise when due (Lightfoot). See 1 Thess. 4:1 for the same thing. For the appearance of *καί* in both members of the comparison see Rom. 1:13; 3:13.

[24] *ἀφ'ἧς ἡμέρας.* Incorporation of the antecedent into the relative clause.

[25] *ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐπίγνωτε.* Note the full apprehension implied by *ἐπιγινώσκω.*

[26] *τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ.* The object of both verbs.

Paul is fond of the phrase "the grace of God" in the gospels (see 2 Cor. 6:1; 8:9; Rom. 3:24; 5:15; Eph. 2:5, 8). In Acts 20:24 Paul employs the full expression, "the gospel of the grace of God." He adds "in truth" here because they had consciously received it in its simplicity and reality, free from the Gnostic perversions.

5. *From Epaphras, Paul's Representative in Colossae.* 7 and 8.

They had understood the true gospel from the first because they had learned it from Epaphras.[27] So Paul sets the seal of his approval upon this Colossian preacher, either a native of the city or at least one of their number (Col. 4:12) and greatly concerned about their welfare. He was the founder of the church in Colossae and is not the Epaphroditus of Philippi (Phil. 2:25). He is with Paul in Rome as he writes the letter, and Paul calls him "my beloved fellow slave"[28] as again in 4:7 of Tychicus. Nowhere else does Paul use this word. They are both slaves of Jesus Christ, he means.

"Who is a faithful minister of Christ in my behalf."[29] This correct reading means that Epaphras was Paul's representative in Colossae, probably Paul's convert while in Ephesus. He may even have been sent by Paul to Colossae in order to evangelize the Lycus Valley. All the more therefore Paul endorses his

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[27] *καθὼς* (third instance in this sentence) *ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ.* Note form of this ablative. *καὶ* here is not in the correct text.

[28] *τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν* (literary plural).

[29] *ὅς ἐστιν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν* (literary plural) *διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ* ℵ*A B D G read *ἡμῶν*, not *ὑμῶν*.

preaching, for he knew him and trusted him. The word minister[30] is the one sometimes used for deacon, but has here the more general notion, not the technical office in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8.

And Epaphras had told Paul the story of their love, "who also showed us your love in the Spirit."[31] As Epaphras had told them the truth of the gospel, so also he has told Paul about them. He has been a faithful representative for them to Paul as he had been for Paul to them. By "love in the Spirit" Paul means genuine Christian love which can only come in the sphere of the Holy Spirit's power. "The fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22). In particular Paul means their love for him, "a courteous justification of the didactic tone which the apostle adopts, and perhaps also as an indication that Epaphras had not made any complaint of the Colossians" (Abbott).

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[30] *διάκονος*, Etymology uncertain, sometimes derived from *διά* and *κόνις* (dust), one who raises a dust.

[31] *ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι*. Note *καὶ* and the use of *ἀγάπην*. No article with *πνεύματι*, but the Holy Spirit is meant.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Petition For Full Knowledge of God's Will

### 1:9–14

1. *Paul's Habit of Prayer.* 9.

The thanksgiving covers verses 4 to 8. Now Paul proceeds with his petition to God in behalf of the Colossians (1:9–14). "For this reason I (we) also"[1] he repeats, referring to the whole description of their faith and love and hope which had prompted Paul's gratitude. He is moved to make definite prayer for the Colossians. As the Colossians had made prayer for Paul, so he now prays for them. See 1 Thess. 2:13 and Eph. 1:15 where the "also" denotes the response of the Apostle's personal feeling to the favorable character of the news (Lightfoot). "Similar assurances are common in the letters of the period, but their conventional character must not in the case of one of so intense a nature as Paul's lead us to degrade them into polite commonplaces" (Peake). Paul's prayers are always definite and precise in each particular case. Perfunctory prayer has no place in Paul's life. The prayers of Paul have suggested interesting volumes by Griffith-Thomas, Pope, and others. They go to the heart of the soul's needs.

[1] διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς (literary plural).

"From which day (or since) we heard it,"[2] he says with manifest allusion to 1:6. The apostle's prayer is thus "an echo of their faith" (Abbott). Paul seems to lose himself in his prayer as his soul is stirred by the very eloquence of his own rapture. "So overpowered is he by this vision of glory that unfolds itself before him, that in the very act of prayer he glides insensibly into an enraptured soliloquy, with the result that it is difficult to decide where the prayer ends and the passionate and inspired declamation of doctrine begins. This particular section of the Epistle reads more like a piece of brilliant inspired oratory than a literary composition, which is not surprising when we remember that the Apostle's letters were generally dictated and not written with his own hand" (M. Jones, *Op. Cit.*, p. 22).

"I (we) do not cease praying and begging for you,"[3] Paul says. He employs the general term for prayer and a more definite word for petition. Ellicott calls this "an affectionate hyperbole" and refers to Eph. 1:16 for similar language. Paul does not mean that he did nothing else but pray for the Colossians, but that whatever else he was doing he was in tune with God on their behalf. The radio gives us a good illustration of Paul's spiritual interest in behalf of the Colossians.

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[2] *ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας ἠκούσαμεν.* The very same incorporation of antecedent as in 1:6.

[3] *οὐ παυόμεθα ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν προσευχόμενοι καὶ αἰτούμενοι.* Supplementary participles. For the middle voice of *αἰτούμενοι* for Paul's personal interest see a parallel in Mark 11:24 (both words) and James 4:3 (*αἰτεῖτε, αἰτεῖσθε*).

*2. Prayer for Spiritual Insight on the Part of the Colossians.* 9.

"That[4] you may be filled[5] with the full knowledge[6] of God's[7] will." The purport of the prayer is thus expressed and it is a marvelous conception. The antidote for the false claim to knowledge (*gnosis*) by the Gnostics is *additional* knowledge (*epignosis*), more knowledge, richer knowledge, true knowledge. See Eph. 3:19 where Paul rises to the great height of praying "that you may be filled with all the fulness of God." It is the perfection of knowledge to know God in Christ.

By God's will Paul means more than intellectual knowledge of God's revelation, though that is certainly included. Full knowledge of God's revealed will is an effective antidote to Gnosticism and all the peculiar cults of all ages. Things to be believed (*credenda*) do matter. But things to be done (*agenda*) matter also. Paul insists often that we should know the will of God (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:10, 17). But Jesus put obedience to God's will as prerequisite to knowing it (John 7:17). Cf. Heb. 5:14. We need precise and correct knowledge, but that will come to little unless we recognize the moral aspect of God's will in the content of our

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[4] *ἵνα.* Commonly so used after verbs like *προσεύχομαι, αἰτέω.* See Phil. 1:9.

[5] *πληρωθῆτε.* Effective first aorist passive subjunctive.

[6] *τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν.* Accusative retained with this passive verb (cf. Phil. 1:10).

[7] *αὐτοῦ* means God's will (see 1:10 *τοῦ θεοῦ*). This word *ἐπίγνωσις* occurs three times in Romans, once in Philippians, four times in Colossians, twice in Ephesians; once in Philemon, four times in the Pastoral Epistles. Paul distinguishes between *γινώσκω* and *ἐπιγινώσκω* in 1 Cor. 13:12 and Rom. 1:21, 28.

own lives. This full knowledge of God's will rests on experimental knowledge of God. So Paul felt about his own increasing knowledge of Christ (Phil. 3:12), the master passion of his life to know Christ better. "The true antidote to the haunting and perilous myths was simply to understand Christ better" (R. D. Shaw, *The Pauline Epistles,* p. 292). This full knowledge of God's will is the way to have freedom from the snares of the Gnostics, with their petty rules and fanciful speculations like hobgoblins of fear.

Paul adds the helpful words "in all wisdom and spiritual comprehension."[8] Wisdom covers the whole range of the mental faculties. These two words often occur together. Lightfoot gives a helpful presentation of Aristotle's distinction between the two and another word for prudence[9] in Eph. 1:8. The word for intelligence or comprehension[10] means insight into the bearing of things while wisdom is the full conception. The combination of wisdom and intelligence is what we all need and what Paul prays for on behalf of the Colossians. One may have intellectual attainments and a store of learning without being wise. There are learned fools as there are ignorant fools. In the knowledge of God's will both wisdom and insight are required. Philosophers praise wisdom, but do not always practice it. The Jews wrote "wisdom books" and in the one called *Wisdom of Solomon* there is a personification and apotheosis of wisdom. These Gnostic teachers made an affectation of wisdom and of understanding, but it

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[8] ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ. See Eph. 1:8.
[9] φρόνησις.
[10] σύνεσις.

was not "spiritual." It was unedifying and not under the control of the Spirit of God. The later Gnostics made a travesty of wisdom and claimed a peculiar relation to wisdom as almost a private possession. Paul wishes the Colossians to have more than the mere wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 1:20; 2:5, 6, 13; 3:19), fleshly wisdom (2 Cor. 1:12). The Holy Spirit can guide them into this rich and full knowledge of the real wisdom found in God's will.

3. *A Walk Worthy of the Lord Jesus.* 10.

Paul's prayer includes right living, "so as to walk worthily of the Lord."[11] That is the high ideal held up by Paul. If the Colossians are full of knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, this walk will be worthy of the Lord Jesus. Paul uses similar language in 1 Thess. 2:12; Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:1. Spiritual enlightenment is shown by a worthy walk. "Doctrines and ethics are for Paul inseparable" (Peake). "To have knowledge and discernment is not character; to live in a manner worthy of him who is our Lord is" (Gross Alexander). Creed and conduct should go together. The best answer to disbelievers today is precisely walking worthy of the Lord Jesus, whom even unbelievers praise.

But Paul goes on, "for all pleasing,"[12] "so as to please God in every way." The word had a bad sense, obsequiousness, in the early writers, but in the papyri, the inscriptions, and Philo it has a good sense, pleasing

[11] περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου. Probably consequence and not mere purpose. Ellicott takes it as purpose, the epexegetical infinitive.

[12] εἰς πᾶσαν ἀρεσκίαν. Studium placendi (Bengel).

or the desire to please. Paul condemns mere pleasing men (Col. 3:22; 1 Thess. 2:4; Gal. 1:10). Paul had told the Thessalonians "how you must walk and please God" (1 Thess. 4:1).

"Bearing fruit in every good deed."[13] The figure of the tree (1:6) is revived. Jesus laid emphasis on the fact that trees are judged by their fruit (Matt. 7:16). "And growing by the full knowledge of God."[14] The knowledge of God is not an end in itself, but the means to the growth into the likeness of God. "The simple instrumental dative represents the knowledge of God as the dew or the rain which nurtures the growth of the plant" (Lightfoot). Obedience to God's will is an organ of knowledge (John 7:17), but spiritual intelligence should lead us into fuller likeness to God. We grow as we learn and bear fruit. Sometimes the loudest proclaimers of the truth are the poorest performers of it. Fruit bearing is more difficult than mere denunciation of error, but it is a more effective answer in the end. It is the best protection for those tempted by error. It is a sad situation if the orthodox have bad reputations, not to say bad characters.

4. *Power for the Task.* 11.

Paul has a third element in his prayer for the Colossians (Maclaren) and it is power (spiritual insight,

[13] ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ καρποφοροῦντες. Note active voice here (cf. 1:6).

[14] καὶ αὐξανόμενοι τῇ ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ. See both participles together in 1:6. Probably instrumental case here without ἐν or εἰς.

worthy walk, power). The word[15] is unusual in its simple form, but is kin to our word dynamite[16] and the substantive appears here so that this is a play upon the root idea of power, "empowered with all power." They will need all power to meet the present situation in Colossae. They can get it in full measure from God alone. He will give it "according to the might of his glory."[17] There is an undiminished supply of God's power for the continuous needs of the saints. "The equipment with power is proportional not simply to the recipient's need, but to the Divine supply" (Peake). The "glory" was the bright light over the mercy seat as in Rom. 9:4. The expression "might of God's glory" strikes one as unusual, but Paul elsewhere speaks of the "weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). Bismarck used to say that wars were decided by "the imponderables." Lightfoot notes that the word here used for "might" is employed in the New Testament only in reference to God, but in Hebrews 2:14 it occurs of the power of the devil. In Eph. 1:19 Paul speaks of the energy of the might of his strength.

"Unto all patience[18] and longsuffering[19] with joy."[20] Patience without cowardice or despondency, "carrying

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[15] *δυναμούμενοι.* In Heb. 11:34 and B has it in Eph. 6:10. It is in the Septuagint. Paul uses *ἐνδυναμόω* several times.

[16] *ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει.* Apparently the instrumental use of *ἐν*, though the figure of armor may be in Paul's mind like the panoply of God in Eph. 6:10–20. The present tense shows linear action. Cf. modern military armored tanks.

[17] *κατὰ τὸ κράτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.* It is the manifested glory of God. See Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:6, 12, 17, 3:16.

[18] *ὑπομονήν.* Literally remaining under, but uncomplainingly and without succumbing.

[19] *μακροθυμίαν.* Good for a long run.

[20] *μετὰ χαρᾶς.*

on" as the soldiers said during the war, perseverance and steadfast continuance when tempted to be quitters, and long-suffering is the absence of wrath, revenge, retaliation, holding out a long time and putting up with a great deal. The two words come together frequently to fill out and supplement each other (2 Cor. 6:4, 6; 2 Tim. 3:10; James 5:10, 11). These graces are to be exhibited "with joy," not with resentment. See James 1:2 and 3; 1 Pet. 4:13. Paul gives his own experience of joy in suffering in Col. 1:24. Some scholars take these words with "giving thanks" in 1:12, but they more properly go here to complete the idea connected with patience and longsuffering. "It forms a necessary addition, for the peculiar danger of the exercise of those qualities is that it tends to produce a certain gloominess or sourness of disposition. The remedy is that the Christian should be so filled with joy that he is able to meet all his trials with a buoyant sense of mastery" (Peake). Joyful patience and long-suffering Paul illustrated at Philippi when he and Silas sang praises to God while in prison. The possession of this power will make the Colossians impregnable against the follies and fancies of the Gnostics.

5. *Gratitude to God for His Gifts of Grace in Christ.* 12–14.

Paul has expressed his own gratitude to God because of his goodness to the Colossians (1:3–8). Now he prays that they[21] may have the grace of gratitude themselves for what God has done for them and for the pro-

[21] εὐχαριστοῦντες. Not to be connected with οὐ παυόμεθα in 1:9, but parallel with the participles in 1:10, 11.

visions of his grace in Christ. Paul urges upon them the duty of gratitude also in 2:7; 3:17; 4:2 (cf. 1 Thess. 5:18).

They are to give thanks "to the Father[22] who qualified[23] you."[24] In 2 Cor. 3:6 Paul speaks of "God who also qualified us as ministers of a new covenant." Qualify is a better translation than make sufficient or efficient. "Make us competent," Lightfoot says. God has made us competent "for the share in the inheritance of the saints in light."[25] This seems like an obscure figure, but it yields to close study. "The inheritance of Canaan, the allotment of the promised land, here presents an analogy to, and supplies a metaphor for, the higher hopes of the new dispensation as in Heb. 3:7–4:11" (Lightfoot). It is not clear whether the share or portion is in apposition with the lot or inheritance (genitive of apposition) or whether the lot covers the whole inheritance for all of which each gets his share. The language allows either idea. "The portion of the saints is situated in the kingdom of light" (Lightfoot). These contrasts between darkness and light, from Satan to God, occur in two of Paul's speeches (Acts 20:32; 26:18). It is the kingdom of light where the saints have their inheritance (2 Cor. 11:14; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Jo. 1:7; Rev. 21:24). It is not that the saints are in the light, though they are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). The lot of the saints is located in the

[22] *τῷ πατρί.* Alone as in Rom. 6:4.

[23] *τῷ ἱκανώσαντι.* Alone here and 2 Cor. 6:4 in N. T., but in LXX. Adjective *ἱκανός* common enough. From *ἱκνέομαι, ἱκάνω,* to reach, attain. Cf. 2 Cor. 2:16.

[24] *ὑμᾶς.* Right reading, not *ἡμᾶς.*

[25] *εἰς τὴν μερίδα τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί.*

realm of light, not in that of darkness. Light is a characteristic of the kingdom here as well as in heaven. "This blessed inheritance may be entered upon in part even here on earth" (Ellicott).

"Who rescued us out of the power of darkness."[26] "We were slaves in the land of darkness. God rescued us from this thraldom" (Lightfoot). It is a powerful picture that Paul has drawn of the power of sin and Satan over the souls of men. It is the same figure that he employed in his address to Agrippa (Acts 26:18). We speak today of heathen darkness. There is horror in the grip of darkness. Jesus (Luke 22:53) said to the officers of the Sanhedrin come to arrest him: "But this is your hour and the power of darkness." Chrysostom said: "It is hard to be simply under the power of the devil, but that he should also have authority is still harder." But God "rescued us" at our conversion when the grip of Satan was broken. We do not need to personify darkness here in order to catch the boldness of Paul's imagery.

"He transported us thence and settled us as free colonists and citizens in the kingdom of his Son in the realms of light" (Lightfoot). That is a free paraphrase that catches Paul's idea finely. God did more than rescue us out of the power of darkness. He "transported us,"[27] changed our habitation. He carried us over "into the kingdom of the Son of his love."[28] The verb here is used by classical writers for the removal of whole bodies of men, like colonists or military

[26] ὃς ἐρύσατο ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ σκότους. The ὃς refers to τῷ πατρί. Liberty of action in meant by ἐξουσίας.

[27] μετέστησεν. Note μετα—.

[28] εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ. Note these genitives.

conquests. When they were converted or born again, they entered into the kingdom of light, that of the Son of God's love, his beloved Son. These Gnostics claimed special illumination and initiation, but it is all darkness in comparison with pure Christianity. It is the spiritual Israel and not the mere traditional Judaism. It is a beautiful phrase that Paul employs here of the Father's love for his Son. The mission of the Son is to reveal the Father. He is the Son of God's love (1 John 4:9).

"In whom we have the redemption."[29] Paul glides by this relative clause into a description of the redemptive work of Christ. It is difficult to tell where the real prayer ceases. But it is in Christ that we already possess the redemption. It is a present reality as is the kingdom. "Our redemption is grounded in Christ, the Son of the Father's love; and it is actualized in individual experience in the consciousness of forgiveness" (Gross Alexander). So Paul explains this redemption in Christ to be "the forgiveness of sins"[30] by an appositional phrase. The redemption in Christ brings forgiveness of sins to all who make peace with God on these terms. This is the tremendous fact for us all, however poorly we may be able to explain the great fact by our theories of the atonement.

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[29] *ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν.* B has *ἔσχομεν* here as ℵ D have in Eph. 1:7. *ἀπολύτρωσις* is release by the payment of a ransom as the papyri and inscriptions show abundantly. See Mark 10:45 where Jesus uses *λύτρον* of his death for us.

[30] *τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. ἄφεσις* means removal. The sins are done away with pardon, remission of penalty.

## CHAPTER V

### The Preëminence of Christ

### 1: 15–20

1. *Transition to the Doctrine of the Person of Christ.*

Paul in a thoroughly characteristic fashion glides from prayer to exposition. Soliloquy often follows prayer. The prayer really began in 1:3 with gratitude to God for His grace to the Colossians (1:3–8). Then he makes definite petition to God for more knowledge and power for the Colossians (1:9). The sentence as punctuated by Westcott and Hort continues from verse 9 through verse 23 by means of participles (verses 10, 11, 12, 20, 21, 23), with repetition of the relative referring to Christ (14, 15, 18). There is an anacoluthon in verse 22 and various conjunctions. Thoughts pile upon one another, but the line of thought is clear enough. In verse 13 Paul introduced Christ as "the Son of his love" (meaning God's by "His"), "in whom we have the redemption, the forgiveness of sins." But Paul turns away from prayer at this point to a magnificient presentation of the Preëminence of Christ in opposition to the Gnostic degradation of Christ. This exaltation of Christ is not a new idea with Paul. If Philippians precedes Colossians, he had already written the great Christological passage in that Epistle (2:5–

11). But certainly 2 Corinthians came some years before, where Paul had written such majestic passages about Christ as 3:18 and 4:4–6. The heart of what Paul has to say against the Gnostic heresy comes in these verses in the middle of the long sentence which began with prayer. Paul here presents Christ the Image of God (1:15a) in his relation to Deity, as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe (1:15b–17), and as the Redeeming Head of the Church or the Spiritual Kingdom (1:18–20). The Preincarnate state[1] of Christ is implied as well as the Incarnation[2] and the Glorification. There is the same conception of Christ in these verses that we have in John 1:1–18, though Paul does not employ the term Logos. "The reign of Christ has already begun. His kingdom is a present kingdom" (Lightfoot). So Paul presents Christ's Person and Work for the contemplation of the Colossians in a passage parallel to Hebrews 1: 2–4.

2. *The Person of Christ.* 1:15a.

In relation to the Deity Jesus is presented as "the Image of the unseen God."[3] The same language occurs in 2 Cor. 4:4 "who is the Image of God." In 1 Cor. 11:7 man is called "image and glory of God." Hence we cannot follow Ellicott in saying that the use of "image" means "the eternal Son's perfect equality with the Father in respect of his substance, nature, and eternity." The idea of perfection is here, but it is

[1] λόγος ἄσαρκος.

[2] λογος ἔνσαρκος.

[3] ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου. The absence of the article with εἰκών does not make it indefinite. Image of God is a definite concept. The verbal ἀόρατος can be either unseen or unseeable.

derived from the context as in 1:19 (Lightfoot). Philo often uses the word "image" with the Logos. Paul seems to mean practically what John does in 1:18: "No one has ever seen God at any time; God only Begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." Jesus is the Idea of God and the Expression of God (two ideas in Logos). So he "has interpreted" [4] God to men. God is invisible to man as even Moses learned when he asked to see the glory of God pass by. God dwells in light unapproachable, whom no one has seen or can see (1 Tim. 6:16). But we see God in Christ. "He that has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). God is like Christ. In the face of Jesus Christ God has given the light of the knowledge of his glory (2 Cor. 4:6). Jesus is the Shekinah Glory of God for those who have eyes to see.

It is a tragedy when "the god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving so that for them there does not shine the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the Image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). Christ as the Light of God is only for those who have eyes to see, the eyes of whose hearts have been enlightened. "In the exalted Christ the unknowable God becomes known" (Peake). Chrysostom, indeed, argues that, as God is invisible, so Christ must be. But that is the very opposite of what Paul means and looks in the direction of the Docetic Gnostics who denied the actual humanity of Jesus. Paul assumes here the real humanity of Jesus and is affirming his deity. He is the radiation or effulgence of God's glory

[4] ἐξηγήσατο. Our word exegesis. The Gospel of John was written long after Colossians.

and the stamp of his substance (Heb. 1:3). Jesus Christ is the Representative of God and the Manifestation of God also (Lightfoot). It is likely that the Gnostics in the angel-cult at Colossae called Christ a son of God along with the angels. "As against this perversion the Apostle sets forth Christ as the Son in a unique and absolute sense, the very image and embodiment of the Father and the complete revelation of His nature, possessing a Sonship that both in kind and degree distinguishes Him from every other being, spiritual or human, who may in some sense be called a 'Son of God'" (M. Jones). The Gnostic heretics imagined a series of æons or emanations that came in between God and man. "Against the shadowy, visionary speculations of the heretics the Apostle sets the certain and unquestionable knowledge of God, to which the Christian attains in Christ and in Him alone" (M. Jones.

There is no hesitation and no doubt in Paul about Christ. He has never wavered from the vision of Christ on the Damascus road. The exalted picture of Christ here in Colossians goes directly back to that event, the crucial experience in Paul's career, when Jesus halted the persecutor and turned him into the chief preacher of the ages. Paul has tried Jesus Christ since that day in every phase of life. He placed him on the pinnacle of worship as the Messiah of promise and the Son of God. With that conviction he went forth into all the world to tell of Jesus Christ to both Jew and Gentile, but in particular to the Gentiles. Hence he had turned back the Judaizers who sought to fasten Jewish legalism on spiritual Christianity. In

that faith he now takes his stand against the Gnostic vagaries. He will not let them rob the Colossians of their Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Everything worth while is at stake in this controversy over the Person of Christ. No graver issue was ever raised or can be raised. The issue is with us today. Loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour challenges every preacher and every professing Christian. Paul here places Christ at the top, on a par with God the Father. He is "the Son of his love." Now, as then, men have the privilege of denying the deity of Jesus Christ. But they should not pass as Trinitarians nor should they occupy pulpits or professorships as Trinitarians and teach Unitarian doctrine. There is no dodging the issue that Paul here makes. With Jesus knocked off his pedestal there is nothing left worth contending for in such an emasculated Christianity.

The ecclesiastical experts (Pharisees and Sadducees) rejected Jesus's claim to be the Messiah and Son of God and Jesus charged them with it, but claimed the approval of the Father. He quoted against them Psalm 118:22: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner." Then Jesus added this pertinent and pungent comment: "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). The Jewish leaders rejected Christ. The Gnostics depreciated Christ. Today a "reduced" Christianity challenges the deity of Jesus Christ and presents a philosophical ethical system in the place of the Pauline, the New Testament, view of Christ. The answer of Paul to the Gnostics is the answer that

stands today to the specious pleas of modern Gnostics or "Intellectuals" against Jesus Christ as the Image of God, the Word of God, the Son of God, the effulgence of his glory and the stamp of his substance, very God of very God.

3. *Christ the Creator.* 1:15b–17.

Paul quickly turns to the picture of Christ in relation to the material universe. There has always been a keen interest in people concerning the origin and nature of the universe. It is a scientific problem that science is not able to answer. The various scientific theories all deal with phenomena, but phenomena call for something or some Power behind them and in them unless one is satisfied with materialism as an adequate explanation. To believe in materialism as sufficient explanation of the facts known and unknown one has either to believe in the eternity of matter and make a god out of nature, pantheism or semi-pantheism, or one has to believe in the spontaneous combustion of life out of nothing. Either view makes too vast a demand upon the intelligent man to gain his credence. Absurd credulity lies along that path. The only alternative to materialism is belief in God, the Spirit and Force who has created matter or who has always existed with eternal matter. There is little intellectual satisfaction in thinking of a God who is no more eternal than matter, and who has no real power over nature. The theory of pantheism denies Personality to God and finds all of God in nature. We are forced, therefore, to believe in a personal God who created the universe, who is superior to

it, and yet who controls it by the law of his will (the so-called laws of nature).

But, admitting the Personal God as the Author of life in all its forms and manifestations, our puzzles have only begun. There is evil in the world. Wrong reigns in many forms. The very flesh of man seems to be contaminated and stained with evil. The Gnostics met this age-long problem in their own way, and they have many imitators in modern theosophy and so-called Christian Science. The Gnostics sought to relieve the good God of the responsibility for the existence of sin in nature by positing the existence of a series of æons or emanations between the good God and evil matter. When they became interested in Christianity, they at once met the problem of the Person of Christ. So they placed him in their line of angels or æons either at the bottom or far down the line. By degrading Christ the Gnostic heretics struck a body blow at Christianity. Paul meets the issue squarely. Jesus is "the Firstborn before every creature." [5] Paul here is speaking of the Eternal Word as early theologians (Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen) understood it. The Arians made Paul mean that Christ is a "First-born" creature like the rest though the first in time and in

[5] πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως. Both adjective and substantive here are doubtful. κτίσις is used of the act of creation (Rom. 1:20), the whole universe or creation with the article as πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις (Rom. 8:22), a single creature as οὔτε τις κτίσις ἑτέρα (Rom. 8:39) without the article. Here "all creation" is possible, but "every creature" most likely the idea. It is not the partitive genitive, but most likely the comparative ablative after πρωτότοκος like πρῶτός μου in John 1:15. "So erscheint in der rabbinischen Literatur die Tora als der 'Erstling' zugleich als das Medium der Schöpfung" (Strack und Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, III, S. 626).

rank. Then many (Athanasius, Gregory Nyss., Cyril, Theodore Mops.) took the view that Paul refers to the Incarnate Christ, but this interpretation "shatters the context" as Lightfoot and Abbott show. Jesus did not do his Creative work during the period of the Incarnation. There are two ideas in Paul's use of "First-born," priority and dominion or sovereignty. "The only ideas involved are priority in time and distinction from the genus *ktisis*" (Abbott). But "distinction in genus" involves dominion. "The right of primogeniture appertains to Messiah over all created things" (Lightfoot). Haupt thinks that Paul is only thinking of spiritual beings or angels by "every creature," but it is not necessary to limit his language in this way. He undoubtedly has the angelic æons in mind and places Christ before in time and superior in rank to them, but he covers also the whole range of created beings. Jesus is not one of them, but stands apart and above them all. Philo had applied the term "the first-begotten,[6] the eldest son" to the Logos, but Justin Martyr in the second century A. D. used the Pauline word.[7] And in Psalm 89:28 there is a Messianic application of "first-born." Lightfoot notes that "the Person of Christ was the Divine response alike to the philosophical questionings of the Alexandrian Jews and to the patriotic hopes of the Palestinians." The Lord Jesus is "the true Logos and the true Messiah." So it is the pre-existence of Christ here that Paul sets forth before his Incarnation and before any of the angelic æons. Paul does not stop to deny or to affirm

[6] πρωτόγονος, not πρωτότοκος.

[7] πρωτότοκος. John's Gospel uses μονογενής.

the existence of these angelic beings or emanations. The material point is "the absolute supremacy of Christ as against every assumption contained in the heresy" (M. Jones).

But Jesus is not only superior to every creature, but he is himself the Agent in the work of creation. "Because in him were created the universe."[8] Four times here Paul uses the philosophical phrase "the all things"[9] (verses 16, 17, 20). The summary use of the constative aorist tense[10] does not mean that the work of creation was done in a moment. Paul merely means that Jesus is the Creator of the whole universe, a majestic and challenging conception that appears also in Hebrews 1:3 "through whom he made the ages." We have it in John 1:3 of the Logos: "All things came into existence by him and without him not even one single thing came into existence." The language of Paul is sweeping and brushes to one side the whole Gnostic cosmogony. Christ is "the creative center of all things, the causal element of their existence" (Ellicott). Oltramare objects to this interpretation of Paul's language and argues that Paul is speaking throughout of Christ as Redeemer, not as Creator. But that interpretation does violence, as Peake shows, to Paul's language. It is too far-fetched to say that the universe was created in Christ "long before the Son

[8] ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα. ὅτι gives the reason for calling Jesus πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως. Paul uses here ἐν αὐτῷ and now directly δι' αὐτοῦ and εἰς αὐτόν. These three prepositional phrases "represent the threefold relation of the Son to the universe" (M. Jones).

[9] τὰ πάντα.

[10] ἐκτίσθη.

came into existence." It is a Christo-centric universe that Paul sees. The word "universe" does not occur in the New Testament, but this is the meaning of "the all things" employed by Paul here as the other philosophers used it. "All the laws and purposes which guide the creation and government of the Universe reside in Him, the Eternal Word, as their meeting-point" (Lightfoot). Paul teaches that the Son is "the agent in creation and the medium of the Divine energy" (M. Jones). Jesus stands at the head above all created things both material and spiritual, "the all things in heaven and upon earth," [11] collective idea and inclusive (cf. Phil. 2: 10; Eph. 1: 10), "the things seen and the unseen" or "the visible and the invisible." [12] This is "a Platonic division" according to Abbott. The locality is noted by "heaven and earth and the essence of things by seen and unseen" (Lightfoot). The spirit world is indicated in particular by "the unseen." Paul now makes "a disjunctive specification of the preceding" unseen things (Ellicott), "whether thrones, whether dominions, whether principalities, whether powers." [13] The list is meant to be exhaustive that no portion of "the celestial hierarchy" (Pearson) may be exempted from essential dependence on Christ. In Ephesians 1:21 the same "four orders of heavenly intelligence" are given, but in a different grouping. No attempt is made by Paul in either passage to give

[11] *ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.* Note different prepositions, plural number of *οὐρανοῖς* and article with each (distinguishing class from class).

[12] *τὰ ὁρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα.* Philosophers used *τὰ φαινόμενα καὶ τὰ νοούμενα.*

[13] *εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε δυνάμεις.*

the real rank of these angelic orders. "No stress can be laid on the sequence of the names, as though St. Paul were enunciating with authority some precise doctrine respecting the grades of the celestial hierarchy. The names themselves are not the same in the two passages" (Lightfoot). I agree heartily with Lightfoot's further comment: "He brushes away all these speculations without enquiring how much or how little truth there may be in them, because they are altogether beside the question." These Judaic Gnostic heretics had their grades of angels whom they exalted while they degraded Christ from his primacy over all creation. Lightfoot gives a careful summary of Jewish and Christian theories about the angelic hierarchy. In the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Levi 3) the "thrones" are placed in the seventh heaven (the highest). Paul manifests some impatience over this theosophical speculation whether it had gained any hold in Colossae or not.

He reiterates in a shorter form, with change of tense, his position about Christ as Creator: "The universe stands created by means of him and for him."[14] The change of tense adds the idea that Christ sustains the universe in its actual operation. Not only is Christ the *raison d'être* of creation (Gross Alexander) or the conditioning cause (*causa conditionalis*) "in him,"[15] but he is also the "coöperating agent" (Lightfoot) or the mediating cause (*causa medians*). Philo employed

[14] τὰ πάντα δι αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται. Note tense (state of completion) and two propositions (mediation and aim).

[15] ἐν αὐτῷ.

this preposition[16] of the function of the Logos as the passive instrument of God in creation. Paul had already said that "the all things" (the Universe) came "through Christ" (1 Cor. 8:6) as from the Father, if this is the correct text.[17] In Heb. 1:2 it is expressly stated that God made the ages through the Son.[18] The Gospel of John (1:3) has the same definite statement. Paul leaves no room here for any angelic æons or agents in creation. They are all brushed to one side.

But Paul has a further word to add. The universe stands created "for him."[19] Here the climax is reached concerning Christ as Creator. "The conditions of existence are so ordered that without Christ it cannot attain its perfection" (Abbott). Christ is the goal of creation, the *causa finalis* or *finis ultimus*. He is the Alpha and the Omega of the Father's creative purpose (M. Jones) as Jesus is represented as saying in Rev. 22:13: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." See Rev. 1:8 where God the Father is termed the Alpha and the Omega. In Rom. 11:36 Paul has a similar passage about God: "Because out of him and through him and unto him are the all things."[20] He applies here in Col. 1:16 the same language except that he does not use "out of."[21] He reserves that preposition for

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[16] διά.

[17] δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ. There is good evidence for δι' ὃν instead of δι' οὗ. If ὃν is correct Paul makes here the double use of διά with accusative as reason or ground and genitive of agent seen in Heb. 2:10 of God δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ οὗ τὰ πάντα.

[18] δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας.

[19] εἰς αὐτόν.

[20] ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα

[21] ἐξ αὐτοῦ.

the Father. There is no inconsistency in Paul's statement as Holtzmann argued, for Paul recognizes that in the end the Son will subject all things unto the Father after he has first subjected all things to himself, every rule and all authority and power (1 Cor. 15:24–28). The supremacy of Christ for Paul is no new idea and it in no way contradicts the subordination of the Son to the Father. In 1 Cor. 8:6 Paul had said that "the all things" come "out of" the Father and "by means of" the Son and "we" are "for"[22] the Father and "through" the Son. But here Paul makes the Son the goal along with the Father. A theological professor wrote in a theological quarterly that Christ is "a landmark" and not "a goal." That is certainly true of this theological professor, but not of Paul. Paul conceives a vital relation between the universe and Christ even in the redemptive aspects of his work: "For we know that all creation groans together and has birth-pangs until now"[23] (Rom. 8:23) and there is a longing for deliverance through Christ (Rom. 8:19). In Col. 1:20 Paul will claim the final reconciliation of the universe through Christ as in Eph. 1:20. "The Eternal Word is the goal of the Universe as He was the starting-point. It must end in unity, as it proceeded from unity: and the centre of this unity is Christ" (Lightfoot). Paul's philosophy of the universe is Christo-centric. There are great scientists today who find Christ the center of the majestic universe unfolded by modern discoveries astronomical,

[22] ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτοῦ.

[23] ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συνστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν.

biological, and chemical. There is grandeur in the sweep of Paul's conception of Christ, but while on earth Jesus had twice claimed all power in heaven and on earth (Matt. 11:27=Luke 10:22; Matt. 28:18: "all authority has been given to me in heaven and upon earth"). Paul has not carried his Christology beyond the teaching of the Master in order to defeat the Gnostic heretics.

Paul now makes a resumé of his argument about the creative activity of Christ: "And he is before all things and the all things stand together in him"[24] (Col. 1:18). The scholars differ as to whether by "before" here Paul means priority in time or in rank. Both things are true and both are involved in his preceding argument about the preëminence of Christ in creation. As creator he is prior both in time and in rank. In James 5:12 and 1 Peter 4:8 the preposition "before" is used for rank though usually in the New Testament priority in time or place is the idea. Anyhow Paul emphasizes the preëxistence of Christ before all creation. "It is true that what the Apostle has primarily in his mind is the Exalted Christ and His present relation to the Universe, but all through his exposition he appears to assume the preëxistence of the Son, and in this particular clause he seems to declare it explicitly" (M. Jones). In John 8:58 Jesus expressed the consciousness of existence before Abraham lived: "Before

[24] *καὶ αὐτὸς ἔστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.* Note accent of *ἔστιν* (existence of Christ). Note also emphatic use of *καὶ αὐτὸς.* Note the tense of *συνέστηκεν* (permanence) and the preposition *συν-* (cohering).

Abraham came I am." [25] Jesus reveals a like consciousness of preëxistence in John 17:5. So Paul asserts the absolute preëxistence of Christ as God's Son. Christ was the causal sphere of the creation of the universe, "in him were the all things created" [26] (1:16). But he is also the agent and the goal of the permanent creative activity, "the all things stand created by him and for him." [27] "Christ was the conditional element of their *creation,* the causal element of their *persistence*" (Ellicott). See Heb. 1:3, "Bearing the all things by the word of his power." But once more, "the all things consist in him." Aristotle said that "the all things are out of God and by means of God cohere for us" [28] (*De Mundo,* vi. 471), a remarkable parallel, whether Paul had read Aristotle or not. Why should he not have read Aristotle? In Christ the universe holds together and finds its coherence. "He impresses upon creation that principle of unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos" (Lightfoot). An illustration is found in gravitation which even with Einstein's relativity is merely an expression of Christ's cosmic will. "His is the power by means of which the Universe becomes an ordered and regulated whole, with all its parts in the right places and with all its antagonisms reconciled. He is the Keystone of the arch, and without Him the whole edifice would dissolve into con-

[25] πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί. Note difference between γενέσθαι and εἰμί. The timeless present appears in εἰμί, the eternal existence of Christ (See Ex. 3:14). Αὐτός here emphasizes personality and εἰμί preëxistence (Lightfoot).

[26] ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη.

[27] τὰ πάντα δι αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται.

[28] ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ θεοῦ ἡμῖν συνέστηκεν.

stituent factors and perish irretrievably" (M. Jones). "In him the all things consist." Christ "sustains" the universe in a sense beyond anything that Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics knew when they employed this verb of God, or than Philo understood when he used it of the Logos.

4. *Christ the Head of the Church.* 1:18–20.

Here also Christ is supreme, in the spiritual realm as in the material universe. "And he is the head of the body, the church."[29] By "church" here Paul clearly means the kingdom of God in which Christ is King. The local use of the word church which is common enough in the New Testament is not permissible here, for the contrast is with the material universe, a general conception. The same general use of *ecclesia* occurs in Matt. 16:18 in contrast with the Jewish *ecclesia,* and also in Eph. 1:23, 5:29; Heb. 12:23. Here Paul employs two words, "the body, the church," the one in explanatory apposition to the other, a sort of epexegetical apposition. Paul has already called believers the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5), "a unified organism" (M. Jones). Christ is the Head of each local church as he is the Head of the general or universal church. In 1 Cor. 11:3 Paul calls Christ the head of the man. We are all members of one body in Christ who is our Head. The new thing that Paul

[29] *καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος, τῆς ἐκκλησίας.* Note the emphatic use of *αὐτός. ἐκκλησίας,* originally assembly, came to mean an organization (unassembled assembly) as in Acts 8:3, then a general body never actually assembled (Matt. 16:18, Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:23, 5:29).

does here is to combine the metaphors body and church and to speak of Christ as the Head of the body which is his church. The Gnostic heretics did not hold Christ as Head (Col. 2: 19). Hence Paul projects boldly the idea that Christ is supreme in the realm of spirit. He has lordship and dominion over his church precisely as the head rules the body. There is a vital relation between the body and the head; the body, however, does not give orders to the head. It may give pain and often does, but it is under the control of the head and subordinate to the head. Christ as the Head of the Body (the Church) gives it its life, its energy, its power. The Body needs the Head and the Head needs the Body to do his will and to carry out his orders. A powerful picture of the intimate connection of the members of the body with one another is given by Paul in 1 Cor. 12. In Colossians Paul lays emphasis on Christ as the Head of the Church, and in Ephesians on the Church as the Body of Christ. There is a dignity to the Church in this consciousness of relation to Christ the Head of the living organism. This conception of Christ as Head of the Church has exerted through the ages an ennobling influence upon the finest intellects.

But Paul has more to say about the spiritual headship of Christ, "who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead." [30] The relative here has a semi-argumentative force (Ellicott), "in that he is the Beginning." In Rev. 3: 14 Christ is called "the Beginning of the Creation of God," [31] probably a reference to the Incarnate

[30] ὅς ἐστιν (ἡ) ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν. Uncertain whether ἡ is part of the text. See 1:15 for πρωτότοκος.

[31] ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ.

Christ as he who is the first who rose from the dead without dying again, "the First-born from the dead." Christ is the first-fruits[32] of those who slept (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) and the Prince[33] of life. He is the conqueror of death (Heb. 2:10, 14) and because of that victory he will finally abolish death (1 Cor. 15:24, 26). He is the King over life and death, the *fons et origo* of life, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). It is easy to illustrate Paul's idea here from 1 Cor. 15 and Rom. 8.

The purpose of God in this program for the Son is clear, "that he himself may become in all things pre-eminent."[34] Every word here counts for its full force. Christ is supreme in the realm of spirit where the conflict is now going on. In the end he will gain glory from all in spite of their hostility and opposition (Phil. 2:10f.). "Christ is supreme in the Universe in virtue of being the Son, the Image of the invisible God, but He becomes the Head of the Church in virtue of His Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection. The supremacy is as absolute in the one case as in the other, but it is based on different foundations" (M. Jones).

Paul gives his reason for the supremacy of Christ as Head of the Body, the Church, "because in him (Christ) he (God) willed all the fullness (pleroma, plenitude) to dwell."[35] Every word here is challenged and momentous in meaning. "In him" plainly refers

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[32] *ἀπαρχή.*

[33] *ἀρχηγός.*

[34] *ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων.* Note *γένηται* not *ἦ* and the periphrastic use of *πρωτεύων* (cf. *πρωτότοκος* in 1:15).

[35] *ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι.* Supply *θεός* as subject of *εὐδόκησεν.*

to Christ. The verb here for willed, or had good pleasure, is a late Greek verb that is used several times of God's good will or good pleasure in the Son as at the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9=Matt. 3:17=Luke 3:22). Some writers take "all the fullness" as the subject which would personify "fulness." Others that the subject is Christ, but that is hardly consonant with the context. Armitage Robinson in his commentary on Ephesians argues that by *pleroma* Paul means the church as the Body of Christ. But that leads to his denying the natural sense of "bodily" in Col. 2:9 and to make it mean merely the Church as the *complement* of Christ the Head. M. Jones is rather inclined to follow the lead of Robinson here about the *pleroma.* The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, but it by no means follows that this is Paul's idea in the use of pleroma. The natural way to take the sentence is that God had pleasure in the indwelling of all the divine powers and attributes in the Son (Lightfoot). The Father willed for the plenitude of the Godhead to dwell (make home) in the Son. Alford answers the objection to his view by saying: "All that is His own right is His Father's pleasure, and is ever referred to that pleasure by Himself." The verb "dwell" here implies permanent or settled residence, not a mere sojourn (Abbott).

But there is a further indication of God's will in the redemptive work of the Son, "to reconcile the all things by him (Christ) unto himself (the Father)."[36] Here

[36] *καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν.* Note two uses of *αὐτοῦ* (Christ) and *αὐτόν* (God). Note double compound verb *ἀποκαταλλάξαι.* In 2 Cor. 5:19 we have *καταλλάσσω.* Here the completeness of the reconciliation is emphasized.

we have the reconciling function of Christ. Christ is engaged in the work of reconciling the world to God (2 Cor. 5:18f.). It is a great conception that Paul advances. It is not God who needs to be reconciled, but the universe that is alienated from God. God's attitude and plan are set forth in John 3:16. God gave his Son for the world of sinners while they were hostile to him (Rom. 5:8). Here Paul glories in the grand scope of Christ's work of reconciliation, "the reconciliation of a Universe out of harmony with God" (M. Jones). It is the Father who planned the reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18f.), that is carried out by the Son (Eph. 2:16). Paul does not explain what he means by "the all things" which Christ is to reconcile to God. Does he include the spiritual beings alluded to above and again in 2:14f. over whom Christ triumphs? That is not necessary, but some sort of harmony is God's purpose in the redemptive work of Christ, though this does not have to include universal salvation for evil spirits or lost souls, however delightful a hope that may be.

Paul explains how God carries out his redemptive purpose, "by making peace through the blood of his (Christ's) cross whether things upon earth or the things in heaven."[37] The participle here is a late verb in the Septuagint. The word "peacemaker" occurs in Matt. 5:9. In Eph. 2:11–18 Paul shows how Jesus made peace between men (Jew and Gentile) and so broke down the middle wall of partition between them by reconciling them first to God. It is only by the Cross

[37] εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. This participle evidently agrees with θεός the unexpressed subject of εὐδόκησεν. Some manuscripts add δι' αὐτοῦ after αὐτοῦ. The pronoun here refers to Christ.

that the enmity toward God is removed from men's hearts. Race, national, class hatred will vanish as men draw nigh to God at the foot of the Cross of Christ. Here they meet on the level as sinners all. Paul notes "the blood of his Cross" in pointed opposition to the Docetic Gnostics who denied the actual humanity of Jesus. "The combination of the two terms is perhaps for the sake of insisting on the fact of the reconciling death against the tendency to seek peace with God through angelic mediators" (Peake). Abbott gives a full discussion of the phrase "whether the things upon earth or in heaven." There is no way to tell what the scope is. Origen saw an allusion to the devil and his angels. Beza thinks that Paul refers to the souls who died before Christ came. "May it not be that the difficulty arises from attempting to turn what is practically a hypothetical statement into a categorical assertion?" (Abbott). With that question we may let the matter rest without affirming that we know all the details involved in the harmony in the universe to be wrought by Christ.

But surely we are bound to feel the grip of Paul's thought as he has presented the Preëminence of Christ in Creation and in the realm of Grace in a matchless fashion. It is not too much to say that in these verses, that apparently come as a sort of appendage to the prayer, Paul sets forth the real purpose of the Epistle to the Colossians. It is this full-length portrait of Christ as Creator and Redeemer that is the answer to the Colossian heresy, the antidote to the Gnostic poison. And surely his words are pertinent today whenever some preachers are apologetic about the deity of Christ

and are silent about his death on the Cross, and take up with new-fangled theosophical speculations in place of the real gospel of the Cross of Jesus Christ the Son of God. "The end of all the majesty of creation and of all the wonders of grace is that His solitary figure may stand clearly out as centre and lord of the Universe, and His name be lifted high over all" (Maclaren).

## CHAPTER VI

### The Change from Heathen to Christian

### 1:21–23

**1.** *A Practical Turn.* 21.

The long sentence that began with Paul's prayer for the Colossians in 1:9 runs on through 1:23 as printed by Westcott and Hort. Nestle puts a full stop after 1:20, but begins the next word with a small letter and not with a capital as in 1:9. The original Greek had, of course, no punctuation. We have seen how Paul glided from prayer to panegyric and exposition of the Person of Christ, the very heart of the Epistle. And now Paul gives a practical turn to his Christology in its relation to the Colossians themselves. Paul is not a mere doctrinaire theologian, though he is the greatest of all theologians in the grasp and sweep of his ideas about Christ. He is also the greatest of missionary statesmen and preachers. The application of the teaching to the hearers and readers is always at hand with Paul. M. Jones neatly heads Paul's discussion in 1:21–23 "The Reconciling Work of the Son in its Special Relation to the Colossian Church." There is no jolt in Paul's thought in making this application of Christ's task to the Colossians themselves. "He has placed Christ before them in the widest range of His reconciling activity, as restoring to the whole Universe,

both on its material and spiritual sides, its original harmony with itself and with the Divine purpose, and he now proceeds to illustrate the practical application of his doctrine in relation to the Church to which his letter is addressed" (*ibid.*). Paul's method here can be commended to preachers today for their sermons. In 1:12–14 Paul referred to the experience of all Christians, now he deals specifically with the experience of the Colossians themselves. Abbott neatly puts it that "the Colossians are reminded that this reconciliation applies to them also." "And you,"[1] Paul says as if preaching to them, you also, you Gentiles. "The personal application of a universal truth is anti-climax only to a rhetorician. The danger to the Colossians makes it peculiarly appropriate here" (Peake).

*2. Previous Alienation.* 21.

The Colossians must not forget their former state of estrangement as Gentiles (heathen we say with our Anglo-Saxon word, heath or country, or pagans to use the Latin term, both words having a curious tone of superiority of town over country). The Jews were the people[2] and the rest the nations[3] or Gentiles, from the Jewish standpoint. Today Gentile Christians term non-Christian peoples heathen or pagan. "And you once estranged (from God),"[4] once upon a time, in

[1] καὶ ὑμᾶς.

[2] λαός.

[3] ἔθνη.

[4] καὶ ὑμᾶς ποτὲ ὄντας ἀπηλλοτριωμένους. Note ποτὲ, not ἅπαξ. There is the periphrastic perfect passive participle to emphasize the state of alienation. Cf. γένηται πρωτεύων in 1:18 to express linear action following punctiliar in γένηται. The case of ὑμᾶς is either a violent anacoluthon or due to a parenthesis.

their previous non-Christian condition. Paul wishes the Colossians to appreciate the sad condition when they were so long estranged from God. We must supply the words "from God," as Paul's clear meaning. In Eph. 2:12 Paul reminds the Gentile readers that they had been alienated (same verb and perfect passive participle) from the commonwealth of Israel (spiritual Israel, the real Kingdom of God) and in Eph. 4:28 he gives a tragic picture of the sinful details of the old life without God.

Then Paul adds another phrase descriptive of the mental state of the Colossians before turning to Christ, "hostile (to God) in your mind."[5] He used a word often employed for personal animosity rather than national hostility. The attitude of hostility toward God grows out of the sense of resentment because of God's goodness in contrast to one's sins, and because men are "darkened in their intellect"[6] (Eph. 4: 18). "It is the mind of man, not the mind of God, which must undergo a change, that a reunion may be effected" (Lightfoot). The proud in the purpose of their heart will be scattered by God (Luke 1:51), Mary sings in her *Magnificat*. In Rom. 8:7 Paul says that "the mind of the flesh is enmity towards God."[7] There is such a thing as willful opposition to God. The Bolshevists openly boast that they will drive God out of Russia by training a generation of young atheists. In the United States

[5] ἐχθροὺς τῇ διανοίᾳ. Active sense of ἐχθρός, hating rather than hateful. The active sense of ἐχθρός occurs also in Rom. 5:10. It is men who have to be reconciled to God. τῇ διανοίᾳ locative case as in Eph. 4:18.

[6] ἐσκοτισμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ.

[7] τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν.

there is the American Association of Atheists which carries on an active propaganda for the spread of atheism among students. I once knew a university professor in a state institution who openly avowed his purpose to drive Christ out of the school, an illegal attitude in a state school, to say the least. Paganism, like atheism, can be active and aggressive in its hostility to God. There are pagan writers today in America who assume a supercilious attitude of superiority to Christ in their books and magazine articles. They pose as advanced thinkers and critics, but they appear in very old garments musty with age and decay.

But these blatant and blasphemous defamers of God do not confine their contempt to words. They show it "in their wicked deeds."[8] Paul has himself given the best commentary on these words in his graphic sketch of the paganism then and now in Rom. 1 : 18–32. It is true that men sometimes have honest doubts about the existence of God and the deity of Christ. Time and patience will often help such men to find their way to God as George J. Romanes, the great scientist, found his way back to God by seeing that the heart and the will are sources of knowledge as well as the intellect. But sometimes men who lead evil lives camouflage their sins, their real reason for opposition to God in Christ, by talking about difficulties that they wish explained before they can become Christians. Their evil deeds stifle the conscience and becloud the intellect. One does not have to listen to Paul to learn the horrors of the Graeco-Roman civilization. Juvenal and Tacitus and Horace and Catullus and Ovid tell more than enough.

[8] ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς. Note the repetition of the article.

The language of Paul is that of restraint, not of exaggeration.

3. *Present Reconciliation.* 22a.

The text is uncertain, whether "God reconciled you" or "you were reconciled."[9] Assuming the active form in spite of the anacoluthon as correct, we find Paul all of a sudden saying: "But now he (God) did reconcile you."[10] By "now" Paul means "in the present order of things," and not "at the present moment" (Abbott). God is not expressed in the text as in 2 Cor. 5:19, but is clearly implied as the subject of the verb. It is difficult to render the constative aorist here into English. The Greek tenses and the English are not parallel and do not correspond. Here we have to say: "God has reconciled," though there is a definite historical event involved, the death of Christ on the Cross, and though the reconciliation is not effective with any given person till he accepts the basis of the reconciling work of God in Christ. But God has laid the foundation for the complete reconciliation when the sinner turns to God on God's terms. Then the work is consummated.

So Paul adds "in the body of his flesh by means of

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[9] ἀποκατήλλαξεν as Westcott and Hort and Nestle or ἀποκατηλλάγητε with Lachmann, Lightfoot, Weiss, Moule. B reads ἀποκατηλλάγητε and Lightfoot argues that this reading alone proves the superiority of B. But B in Paul's Epistles is not as good as in the Gospels, and Acts. D* G also read ἀποκαταλλαγέντες. With the aorist indicative passive there will be only a parenthesis leaving ὑμᾶς the object of παραστῆσαι to explain the structure, but ἀποκατήλλαξεν calls for a rather violent anacoluthon, leaving ὑμᾶς ποτὲ unexplained. But such anacolutha are common in Paul's Epistles and this is probably the true reading.

[10] νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν. Note the intensive form νυνὶ and the sharp turn marked by δὲ. The verb is the same as that in 1:20.

death."[11] The medium or sphere of God's reconciling work was in the death of Christ on the Cross. The use of "death" here makes that plain, but modern scholars are troubled over Paul's employment of "the body of his flesh," since one word here is enough to make it clear. Marcion omitted "the flesh" and explained "the body" of the church according to 1:18. But that is high-handed excision and still left "by death" unexplained. But Lightfoot, Bengel, and Moule argue that Paul uses both terms to make plain that it is in the material physical body of Christ that the reconciliation took place, not in the mystical body (the Church), a rather curious emphasis. Others (Alford, Ellicott, Meyer, Haupt, von Soden, Peake, Abbott) hold that Paul is opposing the idea that the reconciliation could take place in a merely spiritual being like the angels or æons. But even so this view calls for emphasis on the humanity of Christ (his actual human body and actual death, "blood of his cross" of 1:20). Ignatius has frequent allusions to the Docetic Gnostics who denied the actual humanity of Christ and explained him as a mere æon or angel. It is true that we have no definite proof of the Docetic aspect of Gnosticism as early as A. D. 63, but our lack of knowledge by no means disproves the existence of these heretics. The Johannine Epistles contain plain evidence of the existence of the Docetic form of Gnosticism. It is simpler therefore to see in Paul's language here a veiled allusion to the denial of the actual humanity of Christ. The same words occur in Col. 2:11 in a different context, it is true. Beza, Huther, Barry take this view of

[11] ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου.

Paul's language. These words do not stand alone. The same idea confronts us in Col. 2: 9: "Because in him dwells all the pleroma of the godhead bodily." M. Jones holds that Paul had two reasons for defining the crucified body of Christ as the body of his flesh. One was because of the rampant "contempt of the flesh and an undue exaltation of spiritual beings and of their share in the process of reconciliation." The other was that Paul wished to "remind them that there is a mystical correspondence between their experiences and that of Christ." There may be something in this standpoint, but it seems better to take the emphasis on "the body of his flesh by death" to be a clear denial of the notion that Christ was a mere angelic æon. He had a human body and by the blood of his Cross made reconciliation possible. The Docetic notions of Gnosticism developed fully afterwards, but they appear here in germ and Paul exposes them. M. Jones holds that "it is hardly possible that at this early stage the emphasis on 'the body of flesh' is meant to be a protest against Docetic views of the human body of Christ." One is justified in asking why "hardly possible." They do appear in full blossom not many years later. Why not the bud now? It was through the death of the human body of Jesus on the Cross that he effected the basis of the reconciling work.

4. *The Ultimate Purpose of God About the Colossians.* 22b.

Whatever the actual structure of the preceding clause, whether anacoluthon or parenthesis, there is no doubt about this clause. It expresses God's purpose, if

we read "he (God) reconciled"[12] above. Even with "you were reconciled"[13] as the text, the purpose is primarily God's though the Colossians are more directly included in the act of presentation. But in either case when did Paul mean that the presentation takes place? He says: "to present you holy and blameless and without charge before Him.[14] Is it now a present and continuous process as in Eph. 1:4? Or is it at the Judgment Day as in Eph. 5:27? The passage naturally makes that impression on one (Peake), but Lightfoot and Haupt refer it to God's present approval. Haupt even considers the presentation the same thing as the reconciliation. Lightfoot sees a sacrificial idea: "He will present you a living sacrifice, an acceptable offering unto himself, free from blemish and even free from censure, that ye may stand the piercing glance of Him whose scrutiny no defect can escape." But Ellicott is probably correct when he says that "present" here "certainly conveys no sacrificial idea." The same verb is used by Paul in Rom. 12:1 where there is the picture of our bodies as a living sacrifice. Abbott feels that to see that idea here in Colossians "is reading into the words something which is not suggested, nor even favoured, by the context." So the scholars argue, and one wonders after all if Paul meant to be precise in his figure in this sentence. Certainly the final presentation lies back of it all and God's purpose covers the whole redemptive scheme. M. Jones thinks that "we are completely justified in finding in the whole phrase indica-

[12] ἀποκατήλλαξεν.

[13] ἀποκατηλλάγητε.

[14] παραστῆσαι ὑμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους καὶ ἀνεγκλήτους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ.

tions of a wide vision in which he beheld the whole sequence, the reconciliation, justification, and sanctification of the Christian man and throughout the whole of time, issuing in what was the ultimate purpose of God in Christ, the presentation to Himself of an all-glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle at the last great Day."

The adjectives here call for some comment. "Holy" [15] means separated to God's service, positively consecrated, while "blameless" [16] means unblemished, spotless, the negative side, like the lamb in sacrifice and it is applied to Christ (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19), and "without charge" [17] is likewise the negative side of goodness, but it marks a higher stage in the white life in Christ so that no one will pick flaws in us or make accusations against us from sheer despair over the folly of it, since no one will credit it. But the devil himself will not hesitate to "lay a charge" [18] (the same verb as the negative adjective here) against God's elect children, though Jesus is our Paraclete at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:33f.). This latter word "without charge" is a judicial term "and thus determines the sense of the other two" (Abbott). "The adjectives, then, are best understood of moral and spiritual character" (*ibid.*). And the presentation is to be "before him," [19] in God's eye, though Meyer and Peake hold

[15] ἁγίους from ἅγος religious awe.

[16] ἀμώμους.

[17] ἀνεγκλήτους. verbal from ἐγκαλέω with alpha privative.

[18] ἐγκαλέσει.

[19] κατενώπιον ἀυτοῦ. One of the compound prepositional adverbs so common in the N. T. and in the κοινή generally. Cf. κατέναντι, ἐνώπιον.

it to be before Christ's eye since we are to be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Either makes sense and is true, though God suits the context better here as is certainly true of Eph. 1:4 where both "holy and blameless" are likewise employed.

5. *But Conditional on Their Stability and Loyalty.* 23a.

"If at least you abide in your faith."[20] Paul wishes the Colossians to take no chances with the plausible heretics who were pleading that the gospel which they had heard from Epaphras "needed to be supplemented in theory by the doctrine of the angels, and in practice by the exercise of asceticism" (M. Jones). So Paul takes the figure of a building and presses home to the Colossians the importance of firm adherence to the gospel "which you heard."[21] If you remain "grounded and firm,"[22] Paul argues. Built on the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ, the house will stand as Jesus showed, "for it stood grounded upon the rock"[23] (Matt. 7:25), not like the house of the foolish man "without foundation" (Luke 6:49). Thus the Colossians will have "the sure foundation" and also "the firmness of the structure" (Abbott) that will stand any strain. Once again Paul

[20] *εἴ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει.* Condition of the first-class, determined as fulfilled, assumed to be true. *γε* is an intensive particle that adds a touch of eager anxiety to the supposition. *Ἐπι-* adds also a bit to the idea of continual adherence to the faith. The case of *τῇ πίστει* is probably dative though the locative makes good sense remaining in your faith.

[21] *οὗ ἠκούσατε.*

[22] *τεθεμελιωμένοι καὶ ἑδραῖοι.* Perfect passive participle, state of completion and adjective.

[23] *τεθεμελίωτο γὰρ ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν.*

gives the negative view of stability, "not constantly shifting"[24] (Lightfoot) if we take it as the middle voice. They must not be like a house in a region of earthquakes that is constantly shaken, or on a sandy foundation and constantly changing. The Colossians must resist all efforts to shake them loose from the solid foundation on Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour. I have taken all three terms as referring to a building, but "it is possible that in the third term there is a change of metaphor, and that the Apostle is here thinking not of a building, but of a ship, as in Eph. 4:14, 'tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,' and that the hope of the Gospel[25] is conceived as an anchor as in Heb. 6:19" (M. Jones). A house shaken by an earthquake or a storm (tornado) feels as helpless as a ship tossed on the sea. But Paul is anxious that the Colossians shall not shift "from the hope of the gospel which you heard."[25] It is as serious as that. Failure to remain firm on the foundation and unshaken by the Gnostic winds of doctrine will turn them away from the hope held out by the gospel. They had heard the real gospel from Epaphras. Now they need to remain true to it.

### 6. *The Wide Spread of the Gospel Already.* 23b.

Paul has already spoken of the gospel message as bearing fruit in all the world (Col. 1:6). Now again he refers to the gospel "which has been preached in all

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[24] *καὶ μὴ μετακινούμενοι.* Either middle or passive present participle, linear action.

[25] *ἀπὸ τῆς ἐλπίδος τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὗ ἠκούσατε.* Ablative case with *ἀπό.*

creation under heaven."[26] Moule does not consider the idea hyperbolical, but ideal and thinks that "it was done when the Saviour bade it be done." M. Jones argues that "the universality of the Gospel corresponds to the universal supremacy of the Son, except that the preaching of the Gospel is of necessity confined to the creation under heaven." But it is entirely likely that the gospel was far more widespread than many people suspect. The day quickly came when in spite of imperial persecution Christianity was able to challenge the power of the world empire. Lightfoot says: "To demand statistical exactness in such a context would be to require what is never required in similar cases. The motive of the Apostle here is at once to emphasize the universality of the genuine Gospel, which has been offered without reserve to all alike, and to appeal to its publicity, as the credential and guarantee of its truth." Hence the Colossians were not to be switched off into a corner by the heretics nor to be driven off upon a false trail upon a side issue.

Paul adds once more the seal of his own apostolic approval to the great preaching which they had heard, "of which I Paul have become a minister."[27] There is no apologetic tone on Paul's part in mentioning himself, "abruptly" Lightfoot calls it, "a certain stately self-asserting" Peake terms it. Paul is naturally proud

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[26] *τοῦ κηρυχθέντος ἐν πάσῃ κτίσει τῇ ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν.* Aorist passive participle. Possibly "in the hearing of every creature" (Ellicott), though in 1:15 *πάσης κτίσεως* is without the article. Note Mark 16:15 *κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει.* Note the article with *ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν.*

[27] *οὗ ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος.* Another difficult aorist to render into English.

and grateful for his part in the proclamation of the mystery of Christ to the Gentile world, as we see in Eph. 3:1–13. Paul did not hesitate to magnify his office as every true minister should do. Whatever influence Paul has as the Apostle to the Gentiles he throws into the balance here against the Gnostic intellectuals who would be only too ready to impugn his authority and belittle his work precisely as some writers take pride today in small flings at preachers and at churches. M. Jones has a fine paragraph on "The Value of St. Paul's Teaching for the Present Age" (pp. 73–75). He suggests that to many persons today the laws of nature bring slavery and a sense of terror comparable to the enslavement to the notion of angelic æons by the Gnostics. "St. Paul proclaims unhesitatingly the universal supremacy of Christ and the subordination to Him of 'all principalities and powers,' whether conceived, as in his day, as spiritual mediators, or, in our own, as the laws of nature, and declares that, in the realm of nature as in the realm of grace, all life and all power are mediated through Christ and are subject to His supreme will. He claims for Christ the control of life in all its manifold departments and in every sphere, visible or invisible, and places in His hands the government of the world and the direction of every power that makes for the progress of humanity." This is a just statement of Paul's conception of Christ in Colossians by M. Jones. If it was true when Paul wrote, it is true today. Jesus calls us over the tumult of wild fancies and foibles today as then. Paul's message in Colossians is as modern and pertinent as when he sent it to the churches of the Lycus Valley. There

are those today, as then, who challenge the competency of Paul as an interpreter of Christ. But between Paul and those who challenge him it is easy to decide for Paul and for Christ. "Listen to no words which make His dominion less sovereign, and His sole and all sufficient work on the cross less mighty as the only power that knits earth to heaven" (Maclaren).

## CHAPTER VII

### The Mystery of God in Christ Made Manifest

### 1:24–2:5

Paul has already brought in his own part in the spread of the gospel in the Roman world at the close of 1:23. The new paragraph begun in 1:24 carries on that thought with becoming modesty, but with pardonable pride and gratitude to God. Paul has used the word "minister"[1] in the general sense of that term, our word "deacon," but not with the technical sense of deacon as it appears in Phil. 1:1. Paul will later tell Timothy how to be "a good minister of Christ Jesus"[2] (2 Tim. 4:6), a noble or beautiful servant of Christ Jesus.

1. *Paul's Joy in His Own Sufferings.* 1:24.

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings in behalf of you."[3] The "now" is not merely transitional, but temporal and emphatic (note position), "*now* with the chains round my wrist" (Eadie). It is "a sudden outburst of thanksgiving, that he, who was less than the least, who was

[1] διάκονος.

[2] καλὸς ἔσῃ διάκονος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

[3] Νῦν χαίρω ἐν τοῖς παθήμασιν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν. It is ἐν, not διά, please note. The Western class of documents give ὅς before νῦν, perhaps due to tautology.

not worthy to be called an Apostle, should be allowed to share and even to supplement the sufferings of Christ" (Lightfoot). Whatever repinings may have come to Paul as they do come to most ministers (for instance, to John the Baptist in prison), he has now only joy, "now when I see all the glory of bearing a part in this magnificent work" (Lightfoot). Paul had urged the Roman Christians to "glory in tribulations" (Rom. 5:3). He did not pose as a martyr or exult because of the sufferings that came to him (as Haupt argues), but he had learned how to find joy in Christ whatever misfortunes befall him in the line of his duty. He knows that his sufferings are in behalf of the Colossians and all other followers of Christ. His conception of his ministry gave Paul a grip on himself and held him above all despair. "His sufferings had been brought on him by his labours on behalf of the Gentiles" (Abbott).

Paul has a further glimpse of the part that his own sufferings were playing in the kingdom of Christ. "I am filling up in my turn the left-overs of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh."[4] These words call for great differences of opinion. What does Paul mean by "the things lacking in the tribulations of Christ?" See Rev. 1:9 where we have the very word "tribulation" used also of Christ. We see a like expression in 1

[4] καὶ ἀνταναπληρῶ τὰ ὑστερήματα τῶν θλίψεων τοῦ χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου.

This double compound verb occurs only here in the Septuagint or the N. T., though present in late writers. The single compound appears in 1 Cor. 14:16; 16:17; Gal. 6:2. Ἀντί means here "in turn." ὑστερήματα means the things lacking, "left-overs" I call it. This word appears with ἀναπληροῦν in 1 Cor.16:17. Phil. 2:30 and with προσαναπληροῦν in 2 Cor. 9:12. 11:9.

Thess. 3:10 "and perfect the deficiencies in your faith."[5] But surely there are no deficiencies, defects, or shortcomings in the sufferings of Christ. Even the phrase "the tribulations of Christ" is given various meanings, though "the tribulations which Christ endured" is the natural and obvious idea (Lightfoot). Certainly the sufferings of Christ stand on a different plane from those endured by Paul or any of the followers of Christ. The sufferings of Christ have an atoning value when his death is considered in particular, not true of our sorrows. Some take the sufferings here mentioned to be the sufferings of Christ only in the mystical sense that the church suffers and so Christ does. The Roman Catholic commentators take the point to be that thus the mediatorial sufferings of Christ are completed by the saints since Christ left them incomplete. But the language yields a wholly congruous idea if we let it speak simply. It is Paul's turn to suffer in his flesh, the sphere of the suffering (see 2 Cor. 11 for a specimen of Paul's sufferings). So he meets his destiny and finds joy in it. Jesus did not exhaust all the sufferings to be endured, nor did he suffer so that his followers do not have to suffer. There is plenty left over for Paul and for all of us. There were no "defects" in what Christ suffered as to quality or value. Only Jesus did not by his sufferings put a stop to the sufferings of the saints. It is now Paul's turn. Today it may be yours or mine. It was Paul's turn at the bat to play ball, to use the figure of the diamond.

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[5] καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν. The opposite of ὑστέρημα is πλήρωμα or περίσσευμα (2 Cor. 8:13, 14), abundance.

There is the further idea that Paul's sufferings are "in behalf of his body, which is the church."[6] There is here a direct reference to 1:18. Paul's own sufferings are in his own flesh and he uses the body of Christ, the church, in antithesis or contrast (Lightfoot), a favorite Pauline usage. The mother suffers for the child. Paul feels honored that he is allowed to suffer for the Church of Christ. Paul does not mean that there is any sacrificial efficacy in his sufferings in behalf of the Body of Christ, the Church. Christ's work is complete. There is no doctrine here of the merits of the saints to be passed on. "As regards this particular passage, the Roman doctrine can only be imported into it at the cost of a contradiction to the Pauline doctrine" (Lightfoot). There is here no idea of expiation or satisfaction. It is undoubtedly true that Christ sympathizes with us in our sufferings and sorrows. "Whatsoever pain or trial is borne in fellowship with Him is felt and borne by Him" (Maclaren). "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?," Jesus had said to Paul on the road to Damascus. But that is different from saying that the excess of Paul's sufferings goes "to the credit of the suffering" (M. Jones), a doctrine advanced also by Armitage Robinson in his *Ephesians* (p. 44) where he holds that "the suffering of the Church and the suffering of Christ are also one." That goes close to the Roman Catholic idea of the merits of the saints passed on to others, a doctrine repugnant to Paul's doctrine of grace. Certainly Paul does not mean that he is filling any actual deficiency in the suffering

[6] *ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὅ ἐστιν ἡ ἐκκλησία.* See 1 Tim. 3:15 for the same construction.

of Christ or of the Church, only that Christ left a plenty of suffering for Paul and for all of us. He is urging the Colossians to stand in their lot, and take their turn when suffering comes.

*2. God's Plan for Paul's Ministry.* 1:25.

In 1:23 Paul has called himself a minister of the gospel, here he is a minister of the church, "of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God which was given to me for you."[7] This clause is explanatory of Paul's position as a minister of Christ and of his Church. For that reason he has "a spiritual function in it committed to me by God" (Ellicott). And because of that very fact "it is a joy to suffer for its welfare" (Peake). Some local churches, to be sure, may be too ready to develop this kind of joy in the minister by making him suffer unduly and needlessly. But the happy preacher is the one who has learned how to endure hardship for the sake of the gospel. Paul is able to see that his ministry is in accordance with[8] the "stewardship" or "economy"[9] of God. The unrighteous steward illustrates the office of steward (Luke 16:2–4). All ministers of Christ are stewards in the house of God (1 Cor. 4:1–5) entrusted with the secrets (mysteries) of the family (Titus 1:7), "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"[10] (1 Pet.

[7] ἧς ἐγενόμην ἐγὼ διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς.

[8] κατά and the accusative. the standard of measurement.

[9] τὴν οἰκονομίαν, our very word "economy," though we have given it a special turn sometimes, the financial saving practiced by the steward or house manager in his administration. οἰκονόμος is house-manager.

[10] ὡς καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ.

4:10). Paul is fond of the figure "house of God" for the people of God (1 Tim. 3:15). Paul feels sure that he has been intrusted with this stewardship[11] (1 Cor. 9:17) according to God's purpose (Eph. 1:10), "the stewardship of the grace of God which has been given to me for you"[12] (Eph. 3:2), the very words used by Paul here in Col. 1:25 with the word "grace" added. The use of "for you"[13] is to be connected with "given," not with the following clause as is plain in Eph. 3:2. Paul had a clear consciousness of his mission to the Gentiles and he gloried in it and magnified his ministry. He had a trusteeship from God and must make report to God (1 Cor. 4:1–5) for the management of his trust.

"To fulfil the word of God,"[14] Paul adds. This is Paul's conception of his task as a steward of the mysteries of God's grace in Christ. Haupt rightly sees more than a merely geographical application of this language to the Epistle to the Colossians. Paul did employ similar language concerning the geographical spheres of his ministry, ambitious as he was to preach where others had not preached "so that I fulfilled the gospel of Christ as far as Illyricum" (Rom. 15:19). But here he has in mind the fundamental basis of his whole work as a steward of God. "This he does by

[11] *οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι,* Note tense.

[12] *τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς δοθείσης μοι εἰς ὑμᾶς.*

[13] *εἰς ὑμᾶς.* Dative could have been employed, but *μοι* is already dative. It is "towards" you Gentiles, rather than simply "in behalf of" as *ὑπὲρ* would signify. See the same idiom *εἰς ὑμᾶς* in Eph. 3:2; Rom. 15:16. In the *κοινή* this use of *εἰς* begins to displace the dative as is usual in modern Greek.

[14] *πληρῶσαι τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ.* Probably epexegetical explanatory infinitive (Abbott) rather than design (Ellicott).

proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles, thus making clear the true nature of the Gospel" (Peake). So then Paul seems to mean that he can "fill full" the work of God by carrying on its universal mission and message. It is clear also that by "the word of God" Paul means "the gospel" (as in 1 Cor. 14: 36; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; 1 Thess. 2:13), not the notion of the promises of God.

3. *The Long Hidden Mystery Now Made Plain.* 1:26 and 27.

Paul explains "the word of God" by the appositional clause, "the mystery which has been hidden from the ages and from the generations."[15] "Paul always catches fire when he comes to think of the universal destination of the gospel, and of the honour put upon him as the man to whom was entrusted the task of transforming the Church from a Jewish sect to a world-wide society. That great thought now sweeps him away from his more immediate object, and enriches us with a burst which we could ill afford to spare from the letter" (Maclaren). The language of Paul here is closely kin to that in Eph. 3:9, "the stewardship of the mystery hidden from the ages in God." In Rom. 16:25 Paul's great doxology also contains the words "the mystery kept in silence during the eternal ages." It is no new idea, therefore, for Paul to speak of the gospel as the mystery of God. This word was employed by all the mystery-religions including the Gnos-

[15] *τὸ μυστήριον τὸ ἀποκεκρυμμένον ἀπὸ τῶν αἰώνων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν γενεῶν.* Note the tense. Note the temporal use of *ἀπὸ* as in Eph. 3:9 as opposed to *νῦν* in the same verse here (Col. 1:26).

tics in their own special senses with the notion of secrecy and initiation. Paul liked the word and used it freely for his own rich conception of the gospel of grace, just as he used other terms from the ancient mysteries, "perfect,"[16] for instance, in Col. 1:28, "initiated"[17] in Phil. 4:12, possibly also "sealed"[18] (Lightfoot) in Eph. 1:14. "There is this difference, however, that wherever the heathen mysteries were strictly confined to a narrow circle, the Christian mysteries are freely communicated to all" (Lightfoot). Abbott and Peake deny that Paul borrowed the term from the Greek mysteries since Christ himself spoke of "the mysteries of the Kingdom" (Matt. 13:10=Lu. 8:10). The word was common enough, of course, then and now, in the sense of what is mystical, mysterious, incomprehensible, transcendental (1 Cor. 15:15; Eph. 5:32). But Paul had to meet the teaching of the mystery-religions and he naturally took some of the terms used by them and put his own meanings into them. "The one special 'mystery' which absorbs Paul's thoughts in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians is the admission of the Gentiles on equal terms to the privileges of the covenant" (Lightfoot). This idea Paul explains fully in Eph. 3:1 to 4:3.

Paul generally employs the term mystery when there is the idea of revelation or proclamation set forth. So he completes the sentence with one of his common anacolutha (see 1:22), "but now it has been mani-

[16] τέλειος.
[17] μεμύημαι.
[18] ἐσφραγίσθητε.

fested to his saints."[19] The manifestation (Meyer) was made partly by revelation (Eph. 3:5), partly by preaching (Col. 4:4; Tit. 1:3), partly by both combined. Paul has genuine joy that the long silence is broken (Peake). By "saints" he means Christians in general, not just the apostles and prophets as in Eph. 3:5.

"To whom God willed to make known."[20] It was God's will and grace, through no merit of the saints, that made it known. Ellicott, however, follows Meyer and Alford in denying any allusion to God's free grace or good-pleasure, but only to his will "simply and plainly." At any rate the source of the revelation is solely in God's will. "What is the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles."[21] Paul is fond of this figure, the wealth or riches of God in his dispensation of grace as in Rom. 9:23 "that he may make known the riches of his glory," Eph. 1:18 "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," Eph. 3:16 "the riches of his glory," Phil. 4:19 "according to his riches in glory." He employs the same Greek word each time as here. "The expression does not mean the glorious riches, but rather how rich is the glory" (Peake). And it is "among the Gentiles." The cli-

[19] *νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ.* Note aorist tense, not perfect and the sharp change from the participle to the indicative which brings out pointedly the manifestation. *Ἐφανερώθη* is the constative aorist giving a summary view of the various ways by which the mystery has been manifested.

[20] *οἷς ἠθέλησεν ὁ θεὸς γνωρίσαι,* The infinitive *γνωρίσαι,* from *γνωρίζω* (a late form of *γινώσκω*) means to make known and differs little from *φανερῶσαι. οἷς* = quippe quibus, inasmuch as to them.

[21] *τί τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν.* Note the accumulated genitives here as often in Paul's Epistles. *τῆς δόξης* notes the special attribute of the *μυστηρίου.*

max is reached in this phrase. Judaism was beggarly in its nationalism (Gal. 4:9), while the gospel of Christ broke down all barriers of race, nation, caste, sex. "The conception of the inclusion of all the Gentile peoples of the whole world in the hitherto undisclosed plan of God is so inspiring to Paul that he has to strain language to its utmost to express his sense of it" (Gross Alexander).

"Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."[22] Christ is himself the real mystery of redemption as Paul now explains (cf. Eph. 3:6). This great idea of the mystery dominates the whole passage. Paul probably means "in you," though "among you" makes good sense. The parallelism favors "among" (Abbott), but "within" is more probable (Lightfoot), in harmony with Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 4:19. The same idea occurs in Eph. 3:17 where Christ is said to "dwell in your hearts." This inward dwelling of "Christ in you" is the central fact of Christianity and so constitutes "the hope of glory." The Christian who does not by inward experience know what Paul here means may well question whether he has really come in vital touch with Christ at all. Jesus is the Shekinah glory of God and he shines in our hearts so that we see the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). The wealth of this glory dims into nothing the false claims of Gnostics and Agnostics to superior light and knowledge. Haupt would put no comma

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[22] ὅ ἐστιν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς δόξης. A B G P 17, 47, 67[2] Vg., but ℵ C D L K etc. read ὅς. Probably ὅ is correct, though ὅς is the harder reading but ὅ may have been changed to ὅς because of 2:2 where Χριστοῦ is in apposition with μυστηρίου.

after "in you" and makes the fact of Christ among them rather than the presence of Christ in them to be the hope of glory, but "the indwelling Christ constitutes in Himself a pledge of future glory" (Peake). "The possession of Christ is the pledge of future blessedness" (Maclaren) and "cultivated Europe is finding out that to fling away Christ and to keep a faith in God or in a future life is impossible" (*ibid.*).

4. *The Goal in Paul's Preaching.* 1:28 and 29.

"Whom we proclaim."[23] This is the kind of Christ, as already shown in 1:26 and 27, whom Paul proclaims, the Christ of experience, of history, of hope, of power. The Gnostics had an intellectual exclusiveness that ministered to pride. Paul reaches "every man." The Gnostics, with their philosophic speculations about nature and angels, may vaporize Christ and the Judaizers with their narrow ceremonial Judaism may put clamps upon the spirit. But Paul has the freedom of truth and the wings of the eagle to soar to the clear empyrean. Such a Christ for all races and nations and for the inner life is Paul's platform.

And he proclaims Christ "admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom."[24] Meyer applies "admonishing" to the command to "repent"[25] because of this gospel message; "teach" deals more directly with what one is to believe. The one is re-

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[23] δν ἡμεῖς καταγγέλλομεν. Literary plural ἡμεῖς and emphatic.

[24] νουθετοῦντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον καὶ διδάσκοντες πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ. The general term ἄνθρωπος occurs here. Νουθετοῦντες is from νοῦς mind and τίθημι to put. So to put in mind or to put into the mind.

[25] μετανοέω.

proof or correction and the other is instruction. The two verbs employed by Paul are used together by Plato. Aristotle puts together admonish and persuade as Paul does repentance and faith in his address in Athens (Acts 20:21). The two functions of the preacher are presented by Paul's two words here (Lightfoot). Paul is hardly thinking here only of elementary preaching, for he adds "in all wisdom." But evangelistic reproof and instruction require more wisdom than is always bestowed. Now, as then, the Gnostics talk of a blind faith for the many, a higher esoteric knowledge for the few, but Paul "declares that the fullest wisdom is offered to all alike" (Lightfoot) and so to "every man." Christianity appeals to men of the highest intellect and culture, but it touches also men of the simplest minds who can only trust like little children whom Jesus made the model for adults in the kingdom of God, not adults as the norm for children in love and faith. Paul probably means here the manner of teaching rather than the content, by the expression "in all wisdom," though certainly the content of the teaching is also important.

"That we may present every man perfect in Christ,"[26] at the tribunal at last, "that I may initiate all mankind in the fulness of this mystery" (Lightfoot). "Absolute moral completeness in every man" (Maclaren) is the high aim that stirs Paul here. This is the goal, final perfection for every man whom Paul teaches. The use of "perfect" here is seen by Lightfoot as an allusion to the mystery-religions with their

[26] ἵνα παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐν Χριστῷ. Note παραστῆσαι as in 1:22.

gradations of various initiates. That may be true, though Jesus used it of the final goal when we are to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is (Matt. 5:48). Paul uses the term in two senses as applied to Christians, absolute perfection as here, and which Paul denies having yet attained (Phil. 3:12), and relative perfection in the sense of adults and no longer babes (cf. Heb. 5:14), which Paul claims for himself and others (Phil. 3:15). There are those who claim instantaneous and absolute perfection here and now, but they get no support and no comfort from Paul. Every preacher knows what Paul means when in 1 Cor. 2:6 and 7 he speaks wisdom among the perfect, the wisdom of God. One of the chief discouragements of every preacher is the lack of growth and dulness of understanding on the part of those who should be able to grasp great spiritual truths, who have to be given milk instead of solid food, and sometimes skimmed milk at that.

But Paul toils on. "For which object also I toil, striving according to his energy which works in me in power."[27] In order to present every man perfect in Christ Paul undergoes labor like the athlete in training and even to the point of weariness, if need be. In 1 Tim. 4:10 Paul employs both of these verbs (toil and strive) with the metaphor of the arena. "For to this end we toil and strive."[28] He has a "struggle"[29] for the saints in Colossae (2:1). Paul is fond of this

[27] *εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ* (note singular, not literary plural) *ἀγωνιζόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν δυνάμει.*

[28] *εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ κοπιῶμεν καὶ ἀγωνιζόμεθα.*

[29] *ἀγῶνα.*

word[30] and it throws a light on the passion of Paul's preaching, "to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle"[31] (1 Thess. 2:2). Every preacher is called upon to be a spiritual athlete like Paul (1 Cor. 9:25). The struggle is both inward and outward. Abbott objects to the notion of weariness here in "toil" because Paul adds "according to his energy which is wrought in me in power." But that is an over-refinement of criticism. Surely Jesus as God's Son had fulness of power in touch with his Father and yet he sat in weariness[32] on the curbstone of Jacob's well (John 4:6) and he slept for sheer weariness on the cushion in the stern of the boat (Mark 4:38). Even Jesus felt power gone out of him when he labored for men. And the spiritual agony[33] of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is expressed with the same root by Luke in 22:44. Paul's struggle, like that of the true preacher always, "is carried on in proportion not to his natural powers, but to the mightily working energy within him" (Peake). That "energy"[34] is God's or Christ's the context does not make clear. In Phil. 2:13 God is the one who energizes, but in Phil. 4:13 Christ is the one who gives Paul all strength. The context here rather calls for Christ. It is probably the dynamic middle[35] that we have here and not the passive as in Eph. 3:20

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[30] *ἀγών, ἀγωνία, ἀγωνίζεσθαι,* See also Hebrews and the Lucan writings. Nowhere else in the N. T.

[31] *λαλῆσαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πολλῷ ἀγῶνι.*

[32] *κεκοπιακώς.* Perfect tense of this very verb.

[33] *ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ.*

[34] *ἐνέργειαν.* From *ἐν* and *ἔργον,* at work, and *ἐνεργέω,* to be at work, to work.

[35] *ἐνεργουμένην.*

"according to the power that works in us."[36] Here the "energy" works "in power"[37] while in Ephesians it is "the power" that works in us. But in both instances it is divine power, not mere human energy. Paul is able to make superhuman struggles because he has the strength of Christ to help him. He wishes no men under his ministry with talents hidden in a napkin.

5. *Paul's Agony over the Unseen Saints.* 2:1–3.

The revelation of Paul's profound emotion is not merely personal, important as the personal element is in his ministry and in this Epistle. He wishes to save the Christians in the Lycus Valley from the plausible pretenders with their patent philosophic nostrums. So he lets them feel the throbbing of his very heart in order to win their attention and interest. "In religious matters, arguments wrought in frost are powerless, and earnestness approaching to passion is the all-conquering force" (Maclaren). He now gives the explanation for his strange language in 1:28 and 29.

"For I want you to know how great a struggle I am having."[38] Paul not simply is not ashamed of his personal passion, but he is anxious for them to know something of it. There are two extremes for the preacher. One is icy indifference, the other is frothy personalities. The first is ineffective, the second is dis-

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[36] ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν.

[37] ἐν δυνάμει.

[38] θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω. See this idiom in 1 Cor. 11:3 and with βούλομαι in Phil. 1:12. Usually Paul has the negative form οὐ θέλω (Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13). For the classical ἡλικος see Jas. 3:5 and some mss. in Gal. 6:11.

gusting. There is a *via media* by means of which the personal touch may give the right point of contact between speaker and audience and so open wide the door for the powerful presentation of the message. This is Paul's plan here. He carried on the metaphor of the contest in the arena. Here the inward struggle is the predominant idea in Paul's mind (Lightfoot). Paul had the greatest intellect of all preachers and theologians and also the biggest heart. He is a prisoner, but he can pray (2:1) as well as be deeply anxious.

"For you and for those in Laodicea and for as many others as have not seen my face in the flesh."[39] Paul means to include those in Hierapolis (4:13) and some manuscripts actually add "those in Hierapolis" here. All the Christians in the Lycus Valley are exposed to the Gnostic peril. It is plain that Paul had never visited these cities. They are strangers to Paul, but his interest in them is real. He longed to preach where he had not been (Rom. 15:20), but as apostle to the Gentiles he has a natural and profound concern for them as he had for the church in Rome before he went there (Rom. 1:8–16; 15:14–21). The disciples in the Lycus Valley knew of Paul, though they had never seen "my face in the flesh." We know from the Acts of the Apostles that Paul had not visited the Lycus Valley. He only knew those individuals who had come

[39] *ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικίᾳ καὶ ὅσοι οὐχ ἑόρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί.* The preposition *ὑπὲρ* (over, in behalf of, for) is not repeated as is often the case. The antecedent of *ὅσοι* is not technically expressed, though it includes both *ὑμῶν* and *τῶν*. For the use of the general term *ὅσοι* after particular instances see Acts 4:6. Note the form *ἑόρακαν* without double reduplication (*ἑώ*—) and with ending *—αν* instead of *—ασιν* after analogy of aorist tense. The Textus Receptus has *—ασιν* here.

to him in Ephesus or in Rome or elsewhere. Paul is a model for all preachers of the gospel in that he has a world-wide interest in the spread of the Kingdom. This in no way decreases his passion for the souls near at hand.

"That their hearts may be strengthened."[40] The old English word "comfort" is from the Latin *confortare* (*con, fortis*) and meant originally to encourage to action, not to console in misfortune. Both ideas occur with the word in Paul's Epistles (Phil. 2:1; Col. 4:8; Eph. 4:16). Paul's word for heart here includes the intellect, the will, and the emotions. Paul brings heart and face together also in 1 Thess. 2:17.

"They being knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of the understanding."[41] This sense of the verb, seen also in 2:19, carries the figure of the parts of the body knit together as one body. The billions of cells in our bodies well illustrate this idea. If there is a wound, the cells go to work at once to grow new cells together to mend the breach. Even the cells of steel are welded together. Love is the bond of perfection according to Paul (Col. 3:14). The result of this united growth, like the cells, will be full assurance (1 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 6:11; 10:22). Peake objects to the redundance in this meaning here in connection with understanding. But, as Ellicott argues, the completeness of the persuasion is associated with the grasp

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ἵνα παρακληθῶσιν αἱ καρδίαι αὐτῶν. The verb means to strengthen and then to console. The former is the idea here. παρακαλέω is to call to one's side. The final ise of ἵνα here.

[41] συνβιβασθέντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καὶ εἰς πᾶν πλοῦτος τῆς συνέσεως. Note both ἐν and εἰς with this verb. Note the participial anacoluthon of —έντες, not εἶσαι.

of the intellect.[42] The verb comes to mean "conclude" sometimes, instead of "knit together" as in Acts 16:10, or "proving" as in Acts 9:22 by putting things together. There is enough in the knowledge of Christ to call for the greatest intellectual powers. The Colossians need this to meet the subtle errors of the Gnostic heretics.

"Unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, even Christ."[43] Here "Christ" is in apposition with "the mystery of God," the same idea presented in 1:27. Paul has also the same conception in 1 Tim. 3:16 where "the mystery of godliness" is explained by Christ, *i. e.*, "who." The antidote for Gnostic arrogance is additional knowledge of Christ who is the mystery of God manifested in the flesh. There are other interpretations as "the God Christ" and "the Christ of God," but neither is admissible here, nor is Ellicott's view "the mystery of God, even of Christ," repeating "mystery." There are nine different readings in the manuscripts, some even omitting "Christ." See Abbott for the full discussion. Westcott and Hort suspect an early corruption in the text here.

"In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden."[44] Christ is the mystery of God and in Christ are locked up or hidden all the treasures (thesaurus) of both intuitive apprehension (knowledge)

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[42] σύνεσις is from συνίημι and means comprehension, putting together various sides of truth into a coherent whole.

[43] εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ, Χριστοῦ. Note the term ἐπίγνωσιν, full knowledge. Χριστοῦ is in apposition with μυστηρίου.

[44] ἐν ᾧ εἰσιν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀπόκρυφοι. The antecedent of ᾧ is Χριστοῦ. See Matt. 6:19 for Jesus's use of θησαυρός.

and contemplative ratiocination (wisdom). Paul employs both words together also in Rom. 11:33. The Gnostics and the Jewish heretics used the term hidden (apocrypha) for the secrets in their esoteric writings. This was the original usage. Paul takes the very word from them and claims that in Christ one finds all knowledge and wisdom, not in the writings of the heretics. See Isaiah 45:3 and 1 Maccabees 1:23 for the expression "hidden treasures." The early Christian writers soon applied the term apocryphal to false and spurious writings. In 1 Cor. 13:2 Paul speaks of knowing all mysteries and all knowledge as useless without love.

6. *Warning Against Glib Philosophic Talkers.* 2:4 and 5.

Paul has not overlooked the actual situation in the Lycus Valley. "I wish to warn you against any one who would lead you astray by specious argument and persuasive rhetoric" (Lightfoot's paraphrase). "I am saying this that no one may deceive you by plausible speech."[45] The Gnostics were glib talkers and rattled off philosophic phrases. One may recall 1 Cor. 2:4 where Paul disclaims mere persuasive words, fine as they may seem. These false teachers had the appearance of logic combined with a persuasive personal influ-

[45] τοῦτο λέγω ἵνα μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς παραλογίζηται ἐν πιθανολογίᾳ. By τοῦτο here Paul points back to what he has just said. παραλογίζηται was first used of deceiving by false reckoning and then by false reasoning as here. There is a logical fallacy called paralogism. The verb occurs in the N. T. only here and James 1:22. Houdini claimed to be able to reproduce all the tricks of the modern spiritualistic mediums.

ence (Abbott), a dangerous combination. Paul cannot help feeling concern. "For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am present with you in the spirit."[46] Paul has the same contrast between body and spirit in 1 Cor. 5:3. "Rejoicing and beholding your orderly array and the solid front of your faith in Christ."[47] He rejoiced and kept on contemplating. It is a military metaphor, and it comforts Paul to know that they were a solid phalanx in spite of the attacks of the slick-tongued heretics. Abbott denies the military metaphor, but needlessly as Eph. 6:14–20 shows. Paul watched the Roman soldiers, and was chained to one when he wrote now as in Phil. 1:13. Peter exhorted firmness of faith (1 Pet. 5:9).

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[46] *εἰ γὰρ καὶ τῇ σαρκὶ ἄπειμι, ἀλλὰ τῷ πνεύματι σὺν ὑμῖν εἰμί.* Note *εἰ καὶ*, not *καὶ εἰ* and locative case with *σαρκὶ* and *πνεύματι*. Condition of the first class. Good example of *ἀλλὰ* in apodosis. Cf. Rom. 6:5; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 5:16. Note *σὺν* rather than *ἐν*, union in common interest (Abbott). The use of *γὰρ* here causes some divergence of opinion. I agree with Lightfoot and Haupt that Paul explains his warning by his personal interest in them.

[47] *τὴν τάξιν καὶ στερέωμα τῆς εἰς χριστὸν πίστεως ὑμῶν.* See 1 Macc. 9:14 for the use of *τὸ στερέωμα τῆς παρεμβολῆς.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Triumph of Christ on the Cross

### 2:6–19

Paul now makes a plea for the heart of the gospel message.

1. *Loyalty to Christ Jesus as Lord.* 6 and 7.

"As you therefore received."[1] Paul probably means from Epaphras as in 1:7 and others, not from Paul himself. He endorses again the teaching of Epaphras. There is a good deal of doubt as to the precise meaning of "Christ Jesus as Lord."[2] Paul has this precise expression in Eph. 3:11 "in Christ Jesus our Lord"[3] with only the addition of "our." In Phil. 2:11 we do find "Lord Jesus Christ"[4] and often "the Lord Jesus."[5] Probably Paul chooses his precise language here to meet some false view in Colossae (Peake). "The central point in the Colossian heresy was the subversion of the true idea of the Christ" (Lightfoot). He is Lord of all,

[1] ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε. This verb is common for receiving from teachers (1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:9, 12; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:6).

[2] τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον. The object of the verb is τὸν Χριστὸν. Paul nowhere has the phrase ὁ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς nor Ἰησοῦς ὁ κύριος. He does often use ὁ Χριστὸς in this very Epistle.

[3] τῷ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

[4] κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.

[5] ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς.

above every principality and power (Eph. 1:20). The Cerinthian Gnostics towards the end of the first century sharply distinguished between the man Jesus and the *æon* Christ who came upon him at his baptism and left him on the cross. There may have been a forecast of this doctrine in Colossae. It is not merely the identity of Jesus and Christ that Paul here emphasizes, but his Lordship and leadership whether the Messiahship is directly in mind or not. It is no mythical Christ or unhistorical Jesus for Paul. They had recognized the Jesus of history as a historical person and they had accepted his deity. "The mystic theosophy of the false teachers put in peril the Lordship of Christ in Colossae" (Lightfoot).

So far so good. Now "they were to go on," "as you were taught."[6] "Now they were to go on walking in him."[7] Paul begins with the metaphor of walking in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 6:11). It is the Christ path, the Jesus road. Then he changes to the metaphor of the tree "rooted"[8] in Christ also. Then once more he turns to the figure of the building.[9] The building grows upon the solid foundation of Christ who also binds it together (Eph. 2:20). Paul mixes his metaphors because of his wealth of ideas. "Christ is both the ground in which the root is held (Eph. 3:17), and the solid foundation on which (1 Cor. 3:17) the building is raised" (Ellicott). As a result

[6] *καθὼς ἐδιδάχθητε.* Cf. *καθὼς ἐμάθετε* in 1:7.
[7] *ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε.* Linear action in the sphere of Christ.
[8] *ἐρριζωμένοι.* Perfect passive because the tree remains rooted.
[9] *ἐποικοδομούμενοι.* Linear action again.

of these processes they are "being stablished in faith"[10] as they had been taught, a continuous process. They walk as live men, they take root like a tree, they are built up like a house. They grow firmer all the while. Paul is optimistic concerning the outcome in Colossae. If they do these things, they will naturally be "abounding (in it) in thanksgiving."[11] Oltramare thinks that "thankfulness is a preservative against the new doctrines." The overflow of gratitude to Christ will close the door against the theological malcontents.

*2. On Guard Against False Philosophy.* 8.

Evidently Epaphras had told Paul of one or more leaders who were getting a hearing in Colossae. So he pointedly warns them. "Look out,"[12] he says, "lest there shall be the one who leads you off as booty." There is usually one leader (man or woman) in such a defection who has gifts of leadership. The verb[13] is a rare one occurring only here and in late writers like Heliodorus for carrying off a man's daughter (kidnapping) and Aristaenetus for plundering a house, while Nicetas uses it of seducing a maid. There was

[10] *καὶ βεβαιούμενοι τῇ πίστει.* Probably locative though the instrumental case of *πίστει* makes good sense here.

[11] *περισσεύοντες (ἐν αὐτῇ) ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ.* B D[c] K L have *ἐν αὐτῇ*, a doubtful reading.

[12] *βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν.* The usual construction with *βλέπετε* is *μή* and the subjunctive as in Luke 21:8. But the future indicative does occur (Mk. 14:2; Heb. 3:12) and calls attention to the imminence of the peril. Note the emphatic position of *ὑμᾶς* for the same purpose. The use of the singular article is similar to that in Gal. 5:7 *τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι*; the use of *τις* with the article and the participle appears in Gal. 1:7 *εἰ μή τινές εἰσιν οἱ ταράσσοντες.* See also Luke 18:9.

[13] *συλαγωγῶν* from *σύλη* booty and *ἄγω* to carry off.

real danger that this man (or men) would make prey or spoil of the Colossians like captives in war. Field (*Notes on the Translation of the N. T.*, p. 195) says: "There can be no better rendering than 'Lest any man *rob* you.'" The Colossians were in peril of seduction. It has always been easy for designing and unprincipled men to lead gullible men and silly women captive (2 Tim. 3:6). It would be a tragedy for the Colossians, rescued from the bondage of darkness, to be made captives again (Gal. 5:1).

"By means of philosophy and empty deceit."[14] These words describe the means employed by the heretical leaders. We have here the only use of the term philosophy in the New Testament. The heretics made free use of it and posed as possessors of vast lore that the average man did not know. Paul bluntly calls it "falsely named knowledge"[15] (1 Tim. 6:20), not "science" in our modern use of that term. Philo and Josephus used the word "philosophy." Philo spoke of "the philosophy according to Moses" and "Josephus calls the three philosophies (Ant. xviii. 1, 2)," as Abbott shows. Paul is not referring to the Greek philosophy of Socrates or Plato or to the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers with whom he disputed in Athens (Acts 17:18). He was himself a philosopher in the true sense of the term, in his grasp of real truth as a whole. Certainly Paul is not opposed to philosophy *per se*. He is not an obscurantist. He is not opposed to or afraid of real knowledge in any realm (past, present, or future). Philosophy is not harmful

[14] διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης.
[15] ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις.

in itself, but godless philosophy is a failure. So Paul explains his use of the term by adding "and empty deceit," which phrase shows his point of view here. The word "deceit" means a trick or cheat and is opposed to the word of truth (1:5) and to both wisdom and knowledge (2:3). This false philosophy is "according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ."[18] Tradition is not necessarily wrong. The word merely means something handed down, passed on from one to another, even from generation to generation. But this "philosophy and empty deceit" was merely "the tradition of men" with no basis of truth in it. "The teaching of the Colossian false teachers was essentially traditional and esoteric. The Essenes, their spiritual predecessors, as well as the Gnostics, subsequently claimed to possess such a source of knowledge" (Abbott). The Essenes had a secret oath to pass on their doctrines as they had received them. So did the Gnostics. The later Jews gave the name Kabbala, or tradition, to their mystic theology. "The ceremonial mishna of the Pharisees might fitly be described in this way (Matt. 15:2sq., Mark 7:2sq.): but such a description was peculiarly appropriate to a mystic theosophy like this of the Colossian false teachers" (Lightfoot). It might be written or oral. The various later Gnostic sects all claimed a secret source for their teachings. "The tradition of men" is further explained by the phrase "according to the elements of the world," the rudiments, the alphabet, "belonging to the sphere of material things" (Lightfoot). The early fathers

[18] κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν.

took this to be a reference to the heavenly bodies, which were supposed to be stellar angels, and Gal. 4:11 is urged in favor of it, but Gal. 4:3 is not in harmony with that idea nor is Col. 2:20. There has always been an astrology that taught the influence of stars upon human life (born under a certain star), stars with personal spirits that influence human destiny. It appears in Enoch and Jubilees. Some Greeks actually made the four atoms of fire, air, earth, and water to be personal spirits and worshipped them. Neander thinks that in Col. 2:20 Paul uses "the elements of the world" as synonymous with "world," the earthly as contrasted with the heavenly and spiritual. Traditionalism appears in all forms of human knowledge and custom. It holds in science, in philosophy, in theology, in law. Speculation in either realm is useful if held to be speculation till shown to be true or untrue. It takes courage to go against the tide with new truth in any sphere. Galileo and Pasteur stand out in the progress of scientific truth. Once the indestructibility of the atom was accepted. Now scientists have broken it up into electrons and are even talking about protons. The vortex theory of matter makes a world of the atom with whirling electrons inside. At any rate this false teaching at Colossae is not according to Christ. They degraded Christ and Paul is writing to exalt him. Christianity opposes no philosophy and no science that accepts God in Christ. Any science or philosophy that is anti-Christian (Anti-Christ) is untrue to fact and can only expect the opposition of Christian thinkers. Theories of the universe must leave room for the deity of Christ.

3. *The Fulness of the Godhead in Christ.* 9 and 10.

Paul finds two false principles in the Colossian heresy: "The *theological* error of substituting inferior and created beings, angelic mediators, for the divine Head Himself (vv. 9, 10); and (2) the *practical* error of insisting upon ritual and ascetic observances as the foundation of their moral teaching (vv. 11–14). Their theological speculations and their ethical code were alike at fault" (Lightfoot). There is a real connection between these two errors. Philosophic theory regulates theological conception. Philosophy and theology control human conduct. The Gnostic speculators represented the pleroma or plenitude of God as distributed among various spiritual agencies, angelic æons. Paul answers this fallacy with a crisp and powerful reason for his doctrine concerning the Lordship of Christ: "Because in him dwells all the plenitude of the Godhead bodily."[17] Connect "because" with verse 8 (look out or beware). The "him" is, of course, Christ. The verb for "dwells" means "has permanent home with or in." The word for "plenitude" or "pleroma" or "fulness" has already been used in 1:19. It has the same idea here. "The Godhead"[18] here is the word for the *essence* of deity whereas "divinity"[19] in Rom. 1:20 uses another word for the *quality* of deity. The whole plenitude of God dwells in Christ, not part in

[17] ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς· Every word here counts.

[18] θεότητος, abstract of θεός.

[19] θειότης. From adjective θεῖος. Latin divinitas. In the N. T. each of these terms appears once. In Acts 17:29 Paul in his speech in Athens before the Greek philosophers employs τὸ θεῖον, a common term in Gnostic philosophy.

this æon, part in that. It is a body blow to all theosophical fancies. We have here a flat-footed affirmation by Paul of the deity of Christ "in bodily form."[20] The obviously natural way to take this adverb "bodily" is "in bodily wise," "with a bodily manifestation" (Lightfoot), in contrast to the Docetic Gnostic view that Jesus did not have an actual human body, but only a phantom body. Paul here asserts the Incarnation as John does in his Gospel (1: 14) and as Paul does elsewhere (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6–8). This view also disposes of the Cerinthian Gnostic teaching that the æon Christ came on the human Jesus at his baptism and left him on the cross. The actual deity of Christ is combined with his actual humanity in one person. All the attributes of God dwell in the Son of God who is also the Son of Man, the Incarnate Son of God. It is interesting to recall that this issue between Athanasius and Arius turned on the real deity of Christ whether he is of the same essence as God or of like essence with God.[21] It was only a difference of one Greek iota, it is true, but the question of the real deity of Christ was at stake. Athanasius took the view of Paul and John and won. Some scholars today refer "bodily" to the glorified body of Christ, to the church as Christ's body, reality as opposed to shadow as in 2: 17, personally, in the form of a body (Haupt, Peake). But Paul did not say "in a body."[22] He is expanding the thought about "Christ Jesus the Lord." He was the Son of God before the Incarnation when he became the Son of Man.

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[20] σωματικῶς

[21] ὁμοούσιος or ὁμοιούσιος.

[22] ἐν σώματι.

He took back to heaven with him his humanity and so obtained more glory than ever (Phil. 2:5–11). The fulness of the Godhead, Paul means to say, dwells "in the once mortal, and now glorified body of Christ" (Ellicott), now "the body of his glory" (Phil. 3:21). Paul has his way of explaining the human and the divine in Jesus Christ by actual deity and actual humanity against Gnostic perversion whether Docetic or Cerinthian. The issue is still with us, the gravest of all theological issues, the Person of Christ. The new Unitarianism is as deadening as the old. Sanday (*Christologies Ancient and Modern,* p. 206) says: "It is the philosophy that needs to be altered and enlarged, and not the world that is to be cut down to the measure of the philosophy." Make room for Christ as Lord and Saviour in your philosophy.

But Paul applies the great idea of Christ as the fulness of God to those who are the body of Christ: "And you are made full in him."[23] There is wonder and glory in this statement. This clause is still a part of the reason begun in verse 9. Abbott is probably right in taking it to mean that it is in Christ that you are made full, with the emphasis on "in him." Our fulness comes from Christ's fulness. John has it in the Gospel (1:16) "of his fulness we all received" and Paul prays in Eph. 3:19 "that you may be filled with all the fulness of God."[24] That is our destiny as God's children and we are growing into it as Paul shows (Eph. 4:13) up towards "the measure of the stature of the fulness of

[23] *καὶ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι.* Perfect passive indicative.
[24] *ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ.*

Christ." [25] But Paul by no means asserts that we have now reached this fulness or that we have the Godhead in us in the same way that is true of Christ. We have become partakers of the divine nature by the new birth (2 Pet. 2:4), but not in the sense that Christ is God only-begotten (John 1:18).

"Who is the head of every principality and power." [26] As the Head, Christ is the center of all energy and life for us (Eph. 4:15 and 16) and for all spiritual beings. Paul repeats the primacy of Christ to drive home his point, and he will state it again in 2:19. See 1:16 for previous use of principality and power for angelic beings.

4. *The Spiritual Circumcision in Christ.* 11.

"The previous verses have dealt with the theological tenets of the false teachers. The Apostle now turns to their practical errors" (Lightfoot). The Galatian Christians were in some dangers from the Judaizers who sought to put the Gentile Christians under the bondage of the Jewish ceremonialism. Paul wrote an Epistle to them that is today a blast of freedom for the human spirit. Here in Colossae Judaism, either Pharisaic or Essenic or both, had a grip along with incipient Gnosticism. "In whom you also were circumcised with a circumcision not wrought with hands in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." [27] The Jewish ceremonialists of whatever type

[25] *εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ χριστοῦ.*

[26] *ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας.* Some mss. here read *ὅ*, but *ὅς* is correct.

[27] *ἐν ᾧ καὶ περιετμήθητε περιτομῇ ἀχειροποιήτῳ ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός, ἐν τῇ περιτομῇ τοῦ χριστοῦ.*

were after the bondage of the spirit of man. Paul had argued for the spiritual circumcision, the Jew in the hidden (inner) man, the circumcision of the heart (Rom. 3:28 and 29) as what really counted. Gentile Christians do not need the ordinance of circumcision. They do not need the fleshly circumcision on the body, but the circumcision of Christ, which belongs to Christ. Paul has no reference to the circumcision experienced by Christ in his infancy. Some even take the circumcision of Christ here to refer to his death, a curious idea, surely. The new birth of the heart is Christian circumcision (Abbott). See Eph. 2:11 and Phil. 3:3 for the physical circumcision. Paul had shown in Rom. 4:10 that Abraham had the circumcision of the heart before that of the flesh. He believed God and that was placed to his credit. The circumcision of the flesh was only the sign and seal of the faith which Abraham already had.

5. *The Meaning of Baptism with Christ.* 12 and 13.

Gross Alexander thinks that the introduction of baptism here is more startling than that of circumcision. But both are pictures of the spiritual change wrought in those who are believers in Christ who is their Head. "Having been buried with him in your baptism."[28] It is a pity that baptism is such a controversial subject today, so that it is hard to get a hearing for Paul's figure here. Baptism is another picture of the new life in Christ which Paul expands in Rom. 6:4–6, "which

[28] *συνταφέντες αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βαπτίσματι.* Note associative instrumental case *αὐτῷ.* Second aorist passive participle, loosely connected with *περιετμήθητε.*

may almost be regarded as a commentary on this passage. The figure was naturally suggested by the immersion in baptism, which St. Paul interprets as symbolical of burial, the emersion similarly symbolizing the rising again to newness of life" (Abbott). It is a picture of the death to sin, the burial with Christ, the resurrection with Christ. But Paul does not mean to say that this change from spiritual death to spiritual life is wrought by means of baptism. That would make Paul a sacramentalist like the Jews whom he is condemning. That "theory elevates baptism into more than the importance of which Paul sought to deprive circumcision" (Maclaren). M. Jones agrees with Lightfoot and H. T. Andrews that Paul is a sacramentarian. But that view in my judgment misses Paul's teaching in this passage and in Rom. 6:1–6 and the whole tenor of his teaching. He is the champion of spiritual liberty, not of the bondage of ceremonialism. A sacramentarian could not have written what Paul says about baptism in 1 Cor. 1:13–17. Baptism is the sign or picture of the change, but it does not effect the change.

But Paul proceeds with his figure. "Wherein you were also raised together with him by means of faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead."[29] Baptism symbolizes the resurrection also (that of Christ, the new life of the convert, the final resurrection). It is a prophetic picture of our destiny

[29] ἐν ᾧ καὶ συνηγέρθητε διὰ τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν. Probably ᾧ refers to βαπτίσματι though it could very well, like ἐν ᾧ in verse 11, refer to ὅς. Note καὶ in each instance.

and a flashlight proclamation of the new life in Christ. It is the Christian uniform for the soldier, wearing the colors for Christ. God raised Christ from the dead by his own energy. The picture looks backward and forward. Paul uses the very conception of the uniform in Gal. 3:27: "As many of you as were baptized to Christ did put on Christ."[30] The uniform is the public sign of the enlistment.

"And you, being dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, did he (God) make alive together with him (Christ)."[31] These words carry on further the significance of baptism as a symbol. They had been Gentiles and so dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1). The uncircumcision of the flesh is a definition of their being dead in transgressions. "Having graciously forgiven us all our transgressions."[32] The forgiveness precedes the quickening as the aorist participle allows (Abbott). The pronoun is changed from "you" to "us" (the right reading in the oldest and best manuscripts). The idea of sin as a debt (Lu. 11:4) incurred to God underlies the word forgiveness as also pardon and remission (Lightfoot). God gave life and he can bestow life to both soul and body. Paul offers the power of God to those who doubt. Baptism

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[30] *ἐπενδύσασθε.*

[31] *καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν συνεζωοποίησεν ὑμᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ.* It seems necessary to supply *ὁ θεὸς* as the subject of *συνεζωοποίησεν*, but Christ has to be the subject of *ἤρκεν* because of *ἀπεκδυσάμενος*. Either locative or instrumental case of *παραπτώμασιν* (falling aside). Note *ὑμᾶς* repeated for emphasis. The double compound *συνεζωοποίησεν* occurs in Eph. 2:5. There *ὁ θεός* is the subject.

[32] *Χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα.* Still referring to *ὁ θεὸς*. *Χαρίζομαι* means to grant as a favor.

pictures a forgiven soul that will lead the baptized life of consecration.

6. *Cancelling the Debt on the Cross.* 14 and 15.

As already stated, Paul changes the subject in this long sentence from God in verse 13 to Christ in verse 14. He piles up participles each rich in meaning. In verse 14 the verb and participles suit Christ better, though Lightfoot would introduce Christ as the new subject just before the verb "he has taken it out of the way." If so, God still goes with the next participial clause, "having cancelled the bond against us with its decrees which was against us."[33] It is a note of hand that is unpaid. Jew and Gentile alike had the law of conscience in their hearts (Rom. 2:15) which no one could keep. Still heavier was the debt of the Mosaic law upon the Jew. It was like one's own autograph signed to a note that one could not pay. We see this very word in Tobit 5:3: "He gave him the bond."[34] It is the sign-manual of one's financial obligations. By saying "against us" Paul includes Jews and Gentiles. "The bond is the moral assent of the conscience, which (as it were) signs and seals the obligation" (Lightfoot). And the Mosaic law had its "decrees" and

[33] ἐξαλείψας τὸ καθ' ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν ὃ ἦν ὑπεναντίον ἡμῖν. Our word chirography comes from χειρόγραφον. The participle ἐξαλείψας is used of rubbing out from a parchment by an eraser. Note the double compound adjective ὑπεναντίον. See Heb. 15:27. Ellicott calls the construction τοῖς δόγμασιν "distinctly ungrammatical." Perhaps it is the locative case meaning "consisting in ordinances" or decrees or the associative instrumental. Lightfoot suggests γεγραμμένον as implied by the idea in χειρόγραφον. The Greek Fathers strangely enough take δόγμασιν to mean the doctrines of the gospel!

[34] ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ τὸ χειρόγραφον.

"ordinances" (Eph. 2:15). Probably Paul used it here to call attention to the formal element (Abbott) in it. The Gnostics were setting up a like barrier which Christ had thrown down. Pay day comes around for mortgages. It is a bold and vivid picture that Paul here uses of God (or Christ) blotting out the bond against us, erasing it so that it does not exist any more. The Gnostics were trying to put new mortgages on the Colossians which they could not keep. The debt has been cancelled as Paul proceeds to explain more in detail.

"And he (Christ) has taken it out of the midst, nailing it to the cross."[35] The picture is clear in spite of the condensation. Zahn (*Einl. in das N. T.*, i., 335) distinguishes here, as Peake notes, "between what was written on the bond which was blotted out by God and the bond itself which was nailed to the cross and taken out of the way." Peake doubts the existence of that distinction. Paul hardly means to say that Christ has abrogated the moral law and has removed our responsibility to keep it. One must not carry a figure too far. But Paul does say that the bond itself is taken out of the way and nailed to the cross just as a cancelled bond is often stuck on a file. It is marked paid, wiped out, and then nailed to the cross. The writing itself has now been removed out of the way. To take out of the

[35] *καὶ αὐτὸ ἦρκεν ἐκ τοῦ μέσου προσηλώσας αὐτὸ τῷ σταυρῷ.* Note the change of tense from the aorist *συνεζωοποίησεν* to the present perfect *ἦρκεν* to emphasize the state of completion. There is also a change from participle *ἐξαλείψας* to finite verb, and a change of subject from *ὁ θεός* to *χριστός*. The rush of thoughts here explains these changes by a sort of brachylogy or condensation. Abbott however, agrees with von Soden that there is no change of subject and makes *ὁ θεός* the subject all through.

midst "was a classical expression for removing out of the way" (Abbott). Certainly both God and Christ are involved in the work of redemption wrought on the cross as we see in John 3:16 and many other great passages. If the forgiveness and the blotting out seem to suit God the Father better, the taking out of the midst and the nailing to the cross apply better to Christ the Son of God. The law as a condemning force was nailed to the cross when Christ was. "By the death of Christ on the cross the law which condemned men lost its penal authority, inasmuch as Christ by his death endured for men the curse of the law and became the end of the law" (Meyer). Hence Paul could say: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Lightfoot observes that there is no distinct evidence for the supposed custom (mentioned by commentators) in some cities of running a nail through a decree and hanging it up in public to show that it was abrogated. But, however that may be, Paul's figure is clear enough. We are no longer under the curse of the law which hung over us like a Damascus blade till Christ became a curse over us and brought us out from under that curse[36] (Gal. 3:10–13). The verb "nailing to" the cross occurs here only in the New Testament, though it is in the Septuagint (3 Macc. 4:9). The figure in the verb here is, of course, suggested by the idea of crucifixion. "The law of ordinances was nailed to the cross, rent with Christ's body, and destroyed with His death" (Lightfoot). By the cross of Christ Paul affirmed that he and the world were crucified to each other (Gal. 6:14).

[36] Note *ὑπό, ὑπέρ, ἐκ* in this passage.

But verse 15 is very difficult: "Having spoiled the principalities and the powers he (Christ) made a spectacle of them openly triumphing over them on it (the cross)."[37] Every word used here is in dispute. Probably "the principalities and the powers" are to be understood in the same sense as in 1:16 of the angelic mediators and possibly here referring to the agency of angels in the giving of the law (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). These are brushed aside along with the law itself. The whole Gnostic and theosophical view of angelic æons also would be disposed of. These angelic agencies are regarded as hostile to the work of Christ on the cross. So he "despoiled" them. The verb[38] can be understood of stripping a garment from oneself (one sense of the middle voice) as in 3:9 about "the old man" and like the substantive in 2:11. But that idea involves the conception of Christ's envelopment by the powers of evil like a Nessus robe (Lightfoot). Christ was tempted even in the Garden of Gethsemane, and that may be the figure, though it involves a change of metaphor in the "triumphing over them." It seems better, therefore, to take the idea of spoiling or despoiling since it is manifestly a victory that Christ won on the cross. "If evil spirits, they are stripped of their dominion, but if angels of the Law, they are despoiled of the dominion they exercise. This view, though stigmatized by Zahn as 'an inexcusable caprice,' is probably best. They are fallen potentates" (Peake). They

[37] *ἀπεκδυσάμενος τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας ἐδειγμάτισεν ἐν παρρησίᾳ θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ.*

[38] *ἀπεκδυσάμενος.* This double compound used by Paul and apparently only by writers familiar with Paul. *ἀποδύω* and *ἐκδύω* are common enough.

are not to be worshiped (2: 18). They are not to be dreaded. Paul says that Christ has cast them to one side, whether like an old and outworn cloak or like the arms taken from his defeated foes as spoils of conquest. Christ has made a public spectacle[39] of all his foes, Satan and all his powers, and all possible enemies. So Paul exults in the victory of Christ. We have a conflict with the powers of evil (Eph. 6: 12).

On the cross Christ has led them all in triumph[40] as in 2 Cor. 2: 14.[41] The verb is used of a festal procession, as of the worshipers of Dionysus, as well as of the general leading his captives chained to his chariot wheel. Either figure makes good sense here though "triumphing over" is probably correct. "The metaphor is a bold one whether understood of God or of Christ" (Abbott). Christ took on himself our human nature (Heb. 4: 15), but his victory is complete. "The violence of the metaphor is its justification. The paradox of the Crucifixion is thus placed in its strongest light—triumph in helplessness and glory in shame. The convict's gibbet is the victor's car" (Lightfoot). The "it"[42] refers, of course, to the cross, not to the bond.

### 7. *Freedom from Gnostic Asceticism.* 16 and 17.

The cancelation of the bond against us and the triumph of Christ on the Cross over all hostile powers should serve to keep the Colossians from falling victims to the wiles of the crafty Gnostics. The Essenes were

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[39] ἐδειγμάτισεν. A rare word. See Matt. 1: 19.
[40] θριαμβεύσας. Our word triumph is from the Latin triumpho.
[41] θριαμβεύοντι.
[42] ἐν αὐτῷ. That is ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ.

Pharisees run to seed and went beyond the traditions of the rabbis who had piled oral law upon the written law. They eschewed animal food and even marriage. Christ has set us free from the bondage of the Mosaic law and from all other ceremonial regulations of Gnostics or other mystics. "Let no one therefore judge you in eating and drinking."[43] Paul's "therefore" here applies the previous arguments to the practical error in extreme asceticism (16 and 17) and then comes the theological error (18 and 19). The Mosaic law had regulations for the Nazarites and the priests in the tabernacle, but the Essenes went much further. They were prototypes of the Gnostics and seem blended with them in Colossae. Paul pleads here for liberty in diet as he did in Rom. 14:3 and 4; 1 Cor. 10:29. The kingdom of heaven does not consist in or turn on eating and drinking (Rom. 14:17, 21). But there was a ritualistic rigor also, "or in the matter of a festival or new moon or Sabbath."[44] In reverse order we have thus the weekly, monthly, annual celebrations or yearly, monthly, weekly. Already the Jewish and Gentile Christians appear to be observing different weekly sacred days, the Jews keeping the Sabbath, the Gentiles Sunday, and Paul made a plea for liberty about it in Rom. 14:5. The Judaizers in Galatia made a great point of the Jewish sacred days and Paul expressed his

[43] *μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει.* The present imperative with *μὴ* forbids the habit and also commands to cease doing the thing. Some mss. have *ἤ* instead of *καὶ*.

[44] *ἤ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων.* The plural here for Sabbath, as often in Josephus (Ant. iii.10.1). It is a transliteration of the Aramaic singular.

fears for their liberty on this point (Gal. 4:10). In Matthew 23 Christ had sketched the hypocritical bondage of the Pharisees to their oral tradition. Paul will pay his respects to these ascetic Gnostics in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:14). "The setting apart of special days for the service of God is a confession of our imperfect state, an avowal that we cannot or do not devote our whole time to Him" (Lightfoot). And we still need the one day in seven for God's worship and our spiritual refreshment. We should remember, however, the plea of Paul here against slavish bondage to the letter in such things as well as the claim of Jesus to power over the Sabbath as its Lord. The tendency today is towards license and the desecration of the Christian Sunday. Paul certainly did not mean to advocate a wide-open Sunday in his protest against Gnostic ritualistic bondage.

"Which things are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ."[45] Distinctions of meats and observances of seasons belong to Moses while the reality or substance (body) belongs to Christ. Josephus (*War* II. 2, 5) makes the same contrast between shadow and body. A solid body casts a shadow. In Hebrews 10:1 a contrast is drawn between image or picture and shadow,[46] and children are fond of shadow pictures like silhouettes. "Thus it implies both the *unsubstantiality* and the *supersession* of the Mosaic ritual" (Lightfoot).

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[45] ἃ ἐστιν σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων, τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ χριστοῦ.

[46] εἰκών and σκιά. The Mosaic law gave only σκιά, Christianity εἰκών.

8. *Warning against Dethroning Christ by Angelic Mediators.* 18 and 19.

"Let no one act as umpire against you wishing to do it in humility and the worship of angels."[47] Here again we have a very difficult sentence. The verb is here only in the New Testament. There are only two other instances anywhere and it means to decide against. It is compounded of the verb for "acting as umpire" (see 3:15) and "against." The umpire by a wrong decision could rob one of the prize though entitled to it. Jerome thought that the word was one of Paul's Cilicisms, but that is unlikely. The use of the participle "wishing" here creates much difficulty. Possibly the infinitive "to do it" has to be supplied. Some take it as a sort of adverbial use of the participle "wilfully" like 2 Pet. 3:15. Others consider it a sort of Hebraism for "finding delight in" humility. Hort even suggests a new word meaning "mock-humility"[48] and thinks that the scribes copied it wrong. There is a similar compound in verse 23 "will-worship."[49] This conjecture may be correct, but the infinitive can be supplied and it makes sense as above. At any rate the word humility in this context is used in a bad sense. The heathen moralists considered it a vice, but elsewhere in the New Testament it is a virtue as in Col. 3:12 and Phil. 2:3. Here it is self-conscious posing as humble which makes it an affectation. The Essenes and the Gnostics were guilty of angel-worship as some

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[47] μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβευέτω θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων. Note use of θέλων absolutely.

[48] ἐθελοταπεινοφροσύνη. Basil uses this word.

[49] ἐθελοθρησκεία.

Roman Catholics are today. The heretics beguiled their dupes by a parade of humility and angel worship. Iranæus and Clement of Alexandria give the angelology and angelolatry of the later Gnostics. It is false humility and false worship, and Paul exposes both these errors. Perhaps here in Colossae there was a flavor of assumption and officialism in their conduct. This worship of the angels is a good deal like Mariolatry and partly for the same reason from the motives of an absentee God or Christ without humanity. And some men today put the laws of nature in the place of God or Christ as M. Jones shows (*Ep. to Col.*, p. 74).

"Taking his stand on what he has seen, vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh." [50] This clause has long been an exegetical enigma, but it seems to be now cleared up by an inscription in the sanctuary of Apollos at Claros where the verb[51] is used of an initiate entering in for initiation into the mysteries of the god, discovered by Sir W. M. Ramsay. So Paul uses it of one of these Gnostic devotees who has been initiated and who dwells on the secret visions which he has imagined or seen. "Taking his stand on what he has seen (in the mysteries), vainly puffed up by his unspiritual mind" (M. Jones). There is thus keen sarcasm in Paul's description of the conceited initiate who has been led astray by the spooks that haunt dark places where the initiations took place, just as modern spiritualistic mediums work in the dark. There is curious conceit and pride in such performances. The man is

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[50] ἃ ἑόρακεν ἐμβατεύων, εἰκῇ φυσιούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοὸς τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ.

[51] ἐμβατεύω.

"puffed up" [52] with the emptiness of his own mind, puffed up with wind. "The false teachers were without reason puffed up with the idea of their superior knowledge" (Abbott). Paul makes no reflection on the use of one's mind, but on the gullibility and foolish pride of the ignorant victims of the charlatans.

"And not holding fast the head." [53] They have put angelic *æons* in the place of Christ who is the Head of all the universe as Paul has shown in 1:15–20. They have dethroned Christ from his place of primacy and have substituted these *æons* and angels. There are today men and women who affect a scorn of Christ and Christianity and yet who follow after mediums into spiritualism or theosophy or any other new cult called "new thought" or Christian Science, or anything that comes along.

"From whom all the body by means of the joints and ligaments being supplied and knit together grows with the growth of God." [54] The discoveries of modern biology throw a flood of light on Paul's language here. The nerves and muscles, the cells, the veins and arteries, the connection between brain and heart and lungs, the glands, the response of each part of the body to the will, and their intimate relation to each other and to the whole body—all these seem clear to Paul without the modern technical terms. It is a favorite idea with Paul as he has expanded the figure in 1 Cor. 12. See it also in Eph. 4:15 and 16. This powerful picture

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[52] *φυσιούμενος.* See 1 Cor. 8:1 for the knowledge that puffs up.

[53] *καὶ οὐ κρατῶν τὴν κεφαλήν.*

[54] *ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα διὰ τῶν ἁφῶν καὶ συνδέσμων ἐπιχορηγούμενον καὶ συνβιβαζόμενον αὔξει τὴν αὔξησιν τοῦ θεοῦ.*

here is a body blow to the Gnostics who put angels above Christ. The only way to grow with the growth of God is to be in vital contact with Christ as Head. The body severed from the head dies. The hand cut off dies. Christians today need this lesson. It is a fine picture to see a noble personality growing into the full stature of manhood in Christ. That is to grow with the growth of God, to increase with the increase of God.

# CHAPTER IX

## Death to Ritualistic Dogmatism

### 2:20–3:4

1. *Exposing the Ethical Tenets of the Gnostics.*

Paul has been merciless in his discussion of the false theology of the heretics in Colossae. They had degraded Christ from his throne of glory and power. But in doing that they lost their own moral equilibrium and had toppled over the precipice. They had taken two different turns because of the assumed essential sinfulness of the flesh. One wing sought a solution in extreme asceticism (2:20–3:4) in order to gain the victory over sin, the other let down all the bars and went to wild licentiousness on the idea that the soul was not contaminated by the defilements of the flesh (3:5–11). Both efforts were lamentable failures as Paul shows. Both lines have been taken in all ages. The Stoics tried hardness without the multiplicity of rules of the Pharisees, the Buddhists, and the Roman Catholic monks. The Epicureans practiced license with the abandon of ancient and modern pagans, behaviorists or psychoanalysts. There is a dash and daring in the fine scorn of ethical standards affected by some writers today, but the Ten Commandments do not budge. Besides, sin has a terribly unmerciful way of

writing its own epitaph in the human body and soul. The daily papers and the moving-pictures no doubt minister to the spread of crime by the parade of evil deeds so mercilessly flaunted before young and impressionable minds. A California degenerate tells how he mutilated a kidnapped girl. A Michigan moron explains a like crime as due to the impression made on his mind by the California crime. One sin treads on the heels of another. It is all the worse when such sins and crimes enter the atmosphere of the churches as in Colossae. It is small wonder that Paul is stirred to the depths of his nature by the perversions of the lives of nominal Christians under the influence of the subtle philosophy and vapid theology of the Gnostic speculators. It does make a difference what one believes, for deed follows creed. The false philosophy of matter vitiated the very lives of those who followed it. So Paul lays bare the weakness of asceticism and the horror of licentiousness. In doing this he grounds this appeal upon the fundamental experience of the Christian life as symbolized by the very baptism that they had received, a picture of death, burial, and resurrection.

2. *The Lesson from Death with Christ.* 2:20–23.

"If you died in union with Christ."[1] Paul assumes that they have been baptized when they by that act pictured the definite experience (aorist indicative) in union with Christ. See Rom. 6:2–5 for the fully extended figure. Here Paul refers to the actual baptism

[1] εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν χριστῷ. A condition of the first class. Note σὺν with the associative instrumental case.

where they in a public way proclaimed that they had died with Christ (2 Tim. 2:11).[2] He is fond of the symbol. We died to self (2 Cor. 5:14), to sin (Rom. 6:2), to the law (Rom. 7:6; Gal. 2:19), to the world as here and in Col. 3:3 (Lightfoot). By the use of the aorist tense Paul emphasizes the crisis involved in going with Christ. "They died with Christ when they clave with penitent trust to the truth that Christ died for them. When a man unites himself by faith to the dying Christ as his Peace, Pardon, and Saviour, then he too in a very real sense dies with Jesus" (Maclaren). It is not mere mysticism, it is not mere rhetoric, but to Paul the cross of Christ is "the altar of sacrifice on which the oblation had been offered that took away all his guilt and sin" (Maclaren).

"From the elements of the world."[3] See 2:8 for the same use of "elements." We are liberated from the rule of "the rudimentary, disciplinary ordinances, whose sphere is the mundane and sensuous" (Lightfoot), whether he refers to the personal powers of evil or to the kindergarden methods of the legalists. "You died with Christ to your old life. All mundane relations have ceased for you" (Lightfoot).

"Why as if living in the world."[4] Paul means "still living in the world" just as if they had not died to the old world of selfishness and sin. By "world" Paul does not mean "earth," but the sinful age in contrast with and opposition to the kingdom of God, the new

[2] *εἰ γὰρ συναπεθάνομεν.* Note *σύν* in composition.

[3] *ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου.* For *ἀπό* in like sense see Rom. 7:2, 6; 2 Cor. 11:3; Gal. 5:4. Only here with *ἀποθνήσκω* in the New Testament. The absolute separation is brought out.

[4] *τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ.*

age of spiritual light and leading. Jesus has this same use of "world" in John 17 when he prays that, while the disciples are in the world, they may not be of the world. Paul has the same earnest rhetorical question here as in Rom. 6:2: "We who died to sin, how shall we still live in it." This cosmic sphere is not in subjection to Christ. Mere ascetic rules get nowhere. What is needed is "the expulsive power of a new affection" (Thomas Chalmers). "Do you subject yourselves to ordinances."[5] Those who yielded to ascetic decrees or dogmas were subjecting themselves to a new bondage. Christ had delivered us from this slavery by his death on the cross (2:14). It was tragedy to slip under the yoke again. So Paul mentions specimens of the ascetic rules condemned as a means of salvation: "Do not handle nor taste nor touch."[6] Paul does not specify the application of these ascetic dogmas. It is a curious bit of exegesis that Ambrose, Hilary, Pelagius actually take these prohibitions to be Paul's own teachings, and they have modern imitators, "thus making complete shipwreck of the sense" (Lightfoot). Augustine carefully condemned such perversion. It was an anomaly and an anachronism for the Christian to go

[5] *δογματίζεσθε.* Probably middle though the passive is possible and makes good sense. The active occurs in the LXX in the sense of to issue decrees. It is applied also to the precepts of philosophers. Our very word "dogma" comes from this root, *δόγμα* as in Col. 2:14.

[6] *Μὴ ἅψῃ μηδὲ γεύσῃ μηδὲ θίγῃς.* Second person aorist subjunctive with the negative *μή*, a prohibition against doing such things, the ingressive aorist. Notice *μὴ ἅπτου* (present imperative) in John 20:17 where Mary was clinging to Jesus. The difference between *ἅπτομαι* and *θιγγάνω* is not great. Both are applied to sexual matters (1 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 4:3), though no such idea is indicated here.

back to these things. It was like the Israelites longing for the leeks and the onions of Egypt. It was a new self-imposed bondage after gaining life and freedom in Christ (Gal. 3:1–3; 5:1, 13). They had a double bondage to the Jewish (Mosaic, Pharisaic, Essenic) and to the philosophical Gnostic regulations. The Talmud has abundant illustrations of the Pharisaic precepts. The Essenes taught the avoidance of oil, of wine, of flesh, of marriage, of contact with strangers. "Which things are all destined for corruption in their consumption."[7] The very things themselves which are prohibited perish in the use of them. This is a parenthesis in Paul's sense, but a most effective reply. Jesus himself had made the same point against the Pharisaic contention that, in order to be saved one must wash his hands before eating (Mark 7:14–19). "Why, you are attributing an inherent value to things which are fleeting" (Lightfoot), things that they felt were impure to the touch. Modern monks and nuns practice asceticism for the sake of supposed pietistic effect on themselves. The whole movement for poverty as essential to piety springs out of this idea of the evil of things. These practices are all "according to the commandments and teachings of men."[8] Both Pharisees (Mark 7) and Gnostics, as here, went beyond the words of Isaiah 29:13 where the same combination occurs "commandments of men and teachings." These human commandments were not means of salvation. "We all

[7] ἃ ἐστιν πάντα εἰς φθορὰν τῇ ἀποχρήσει. For this use of εἰς see Acts 8:20; 2 Pet. 2:12. Not only χρῆσις, but ἀπόχρησις, using up.

[8] κατὰ τὰ ἐντάλματα καὶ διδασκαλίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Note one article with both words, closely uniting them in idea.

have access to the one source of illumination, and we are bound to take our orders from the one Master. The protest against the imposition of human authority on the Christian soul is made not in the interest of self-will, but from reverence to the only voice that has the right to give autocratic commands and to receive unquestioning obedience" (Maclaren).

"Which very things have indeed a reputation for wisdom."[9] These ascetic prohibitions as a means of salvation pass for wisdom, but they lack reality. They have the outward show and "make an officious parade of religious service" (Lightfoot). It is all done with a sort of parade and gusto, "in self-imposed worship and affectation of humility and unsparing treatment of the body."[10] The repute for wisdom is gained in a sort of voluntary affectation, "will-worship," possibly of the angels or *æons,* but certainly an excessive and officious display of pious devotions with a sort of mock humility or parade of humility without the reality. The false teachers called this fantastic display "humility." In reality it was a species of religious vanity. The whole thing was a sort of mummery, hollow morality like Uriah Heep's "I'se humble." It was all gratuitous and uncalled for and led to "severity to the body." This lack of sparing the body was the other extreme

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[9] *ἅ τινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας.* Note *ἅτινα* more specific here than *ἅ* as seen also in Gal. 4:24; Phil. 4:3. Observe also the periphrastic present indicative. Note also *μὲν* without a corresponding *δέ*, a common usage as in Acts 1:1, 6.

[10] *ἐν ἐθελοθρησκείᾳ καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ (καὶ) ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος.* Paul apparently coined the word *ἐθελοθρησκεία*, but a number of like words occur like *ἐθελοδουλεία* usually in a bad sense. B omits the second *καὶ*. If this *καὶ* is not genuine then *ἀφειδίᾳ* is explanatory of *ἐθελοθρησκείᾳ καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ.*

to license. "It is used of an extreme asceticism, which did not spare the body, which unsparingly afflicted the body, either to acquire merit or to conquer passion" (Gross Alexander). In times of danger or under the challenge of duty the courageous man does not hesitate to risk his life itself for others. But flagellations of the flesh in order to gain credit for piety is a common delusion through all the ages that persists today with modern *flagellantes.*

"Yet not really of any value to remedy indulgence of the flesh."[11] This is Lightfoot's interpretation of this most difficult phrase. The Greek words will suffer the translation, though under some strain. Modern psychology supports it to the extent that undue repression causes violent stimulus and difficult complexes. Over-regulation intensifies the evil. No regulation leads to license and ruin from self-indulgence. The golden mean is the line of safety and that is found in the Lordship of Christ over one's life. Gnostic asceticism is wrong in principle and ineffective in results. By "flesh" here Paul means not "body" but the unregenerate personality. "Any asceticism is a great deal more to men's taste than abandoning self. They will rather stick hooks in their backs and do the 'swinging poojah,'

[11] *οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός.* Every word here is challenged by modern scholars. What is the meaning of *τιμή,* honor or value? What is the sense of *πρὸς,* leading to or preventing? Usually *τιμή* bears the sense of honor or esteem and *πρός* with a view to, facing. But Lightfoot shows that *πρὸς* does occur in passages where the idea is to check, not to induce. *τιμή* can bear the sense of value, if necessary. Hort and Haupt think that we have here a primitive corruption in the text. To connect *πρὸς* with *δογματίζεσθε* calls for a very long parenthesis. I follow Lightfoot in spite of Abbott's objections, but hesitatingly.

than give up their sins or yield up their wills" (Maclaren). Simeon Stylites standing on a pillar is not necessarily a saint. Outward ceremonial ritualism may only cover a brood of scorpions in the heart. "There is only one thing that will put the collar on the neck of the animal within us, and that is the power of the indwelling Christ" (Maclaren).

3. *Living with the Risen Christ.* 3:1–4.

The preceding argument in 2:20 to 23, rests on the assumption that the Colossians had "died with Christ from the elements of the world." He assumed that to be true by the very form of the condition, "if you died" (as you did). But that was negative. Now he gives the positive side of actual life with Christ. The picture of baptism is in Paul's mind still. "If therefore you were raised together with Christ,"[12] he says with a condition of the first class again, assuming that they were really raised with Christ as symbolized by their baptism. "In the rite itself these were represented by two distinct acts, the disappearance beneath the water and the emergence from the water: but in the change typified by the rite they are two aspects of the same thing, 'like the concave and convex in a circle,' to use an old simile. The negative side—the death and burial —implies the positive side—resurrection" (Lightfoot).

Paul boldly carries the picture to the highest plane. We are now on the other side of the grave and are

[12] εἰ οὖν συνηγέρθητε τῷ χριστῷ. The οὖν refers to εἰ ἀπεθάνετε in 2:20 and resumes the argument there made. The verb is a compound and the συν is carried over to τῷ χριστῷ (associative instrumental case).

walking in the heavenlies with Christ. Here in this Beulah land of the spirit the Christian has new ideals to inspire and hold him to the highest things. "Keep on seeking the upward things."[13] The Christian has the call upward and must heed it. It is like the skylark that sings his glorious song as he flies upward into the skies. "All your aims must centre in heaven, where reigns the Christ who has thus exalted you, enthroned on God's right hand" (Lightfoot). The Jerusalem above (Gal. 4:26) is the disciple's real home. He is a citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20), and must live here as a citizen of the heavenly city in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil. 1:27). "The heretics hoped to attain to spiritual freedom by means of an asceticism which would bring them into contact with the angelic denizens of the spiritual world, but St. Paul points to the one and only way that leads to the conquest of sin and evil, viz. the union of the Christian with Christ in His death and resurrection, a union that belongs fundamentally to the region of the spiritual and eternal, and exalts man to the very heights of heaven" (M. Jones). No man with a muckrake can see the glories all about and above him. He must lift up his eyes and look upward, "where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God."[14] The session of Christ at God's right hand carries with it also a promise of our eternal glory (Eph. 2:6; Rev. 3:21). See also Hebrews 1:3 for the session of Christ at God's right hand. Stephan saw

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[13] *τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε.* Linear action.

[14] *οὗ ὁ χριστός ἐστιν ἐν δεξιᾷ καθήμενος.* Probably *καθήμενος* is not connected with *ἐστιν* as a periphrastic present, but an added statement.

Jesus standing at the right hand of God as he died (Acts 7:55).

"Keep on thinking the things above."[15] As Lightfoot puts it: "You must not only *seek* heaven; you must also *think* heaven." In Phil. 3:19 and 20 Paul sharply outlines "those who mind earthly things"—contrast with those whose citizenship is in heaven. In Phil. 4:8 and 9 he presents high ideals for our thoughts and for our deeds. We are responsible for our thoughts if we let our minds dwell on and revel in the evil things all about us that thrust themselves upon our attention. So Paul repeats: "Keep on thinking the things above, not the things upon the earth."[16] The things upon the earth are not sinful in themselves, though some of them are. But the harmless things become harmful if pursued to the exclusion of and in the place of the things above (Matt. 6:19–21). There are bad smells in every city, but only one with depraved nostrils seeks them out and revels in them like a sewer rat or hyena. Some modern artists and novelists call this realism and thus justify the slime that they parade to the public. But most of all they reveal their own depraved mind given over to uncleanness (Rom. 1:24–32). In particular the preacher of the gospel should not drag the things of the underworld before a promiscuous audience as if he gloated in the narration of the seamy side of life. Jesus drew the publicans and sinners to him to rescue them from their sins, not to parade their sins for the delectation of the Pharisees. The modern word heavenly-minded-ness is sometimes ridiculed and dis-

[15] τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε. Linear action again.
[16] τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε, μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

paraged, but it fitly describes Paul's idea here. There is a great deal of difference between one who goes "slumming" to see the evil side of city life and one who goes into the hells on Broadway to snatch the lost out of the fire, to rescue the perishing from the very jaws of death.

"For you died,"[17] says Paul. It is a definite experience that Paul describes, not "ye are dead" as the Authorized Version has it. Not "died in baptism," as Lightfoot puts it, "you died as pictured in baptism." Paul was not a sacramentarian in spite of the efforts of men to make him so. They died once for all to the world and are now living the life with Christ and in Christ. "And your life is hidden with Christ in God."[18] This pregnant clause challenges the true mystic. Paul is the greatest of mystics and real mysticism is the heart of Christianity. The union of the believer with Christ is taught in John 15 (the vine and the branches) and in the real Lord's Prayer (John 17). One of Paul's characteristic idioms is "in Christ." The world does not understand the risen life of Christ anymore than it understood the life of Christ himself (John 14:17–19). The Christian is dead to the sinful world, but alive to God (Rom. 6:11). To Paul Christ is the essence of life (Phil. 1:21) and death is simply more Christ. Paul speaks of being crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:19) and of Christ alone living in him (2:20). So here we are in Christ who is in God, and

[17] *ἀπεθάνετε γὰρ.* The aorist tense is not used for the perfect.

[18] *καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ. ζωὴ* (not *βίος*) is the antithesis to *ἀπεθάνετε.* Note the tense of *κέκρυπται,* perfect passive (punctiliar plus linear), state of completion. Note also both *σὺν* and *ἐν* double involution.

no burglar, not even Satan himself, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:31–39). That is our security. Christ is locked in the bosom of the Father. We are locked together with Christ in God, hidden though our spiritual life is to the eyes of the blinded world (2 Cor. 4:4). "The union between Christ and the believer, for the Apostle unhesitatingly credits his brethren with what he claims for himself in this matter, is, therefore, a mystical union, transcending thought, a union in which at its most exalted moment all personal and moral relations are lost in the enraptured consciousness of the most intimate contact with and absorption in Christ. And yet the mysticism of St. Paul is essentially a sane mysticism" (M. Jones).

"When Christ, our life, is manifested then you also will be manifested together with him in glory."[19] The reference is, of course, to the second coming of Christ which was a blessed hope to Paul as it is to us. The date Paul did not pretend to know, but he looked for his personal coming to earth again as a glorious hope. Christ is our Life here and now (1 John 5:12): "He that has the Son has life." It will be "in glory" and we shall share in that glory. "We know that if he be manifested, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). And Paul in Rom. 8:17 said that we shall be glorified together with Christ and in 8:19 used the expression "the revelation of the sons of God." The glory will come as the "crown of the hidden life" (Ellicott).

[19] *ὅταν ὁ χριστὸς φανερωθῇ, ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν, τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεθε ἐν δόξῃ.* The use of *ὅταν* with the aorist subjunctive is common enough for a future event of uncertain date. B K L read *ἡμῶν*, ℵ C D* *ὑμῶν*. The use of *φανερόω* rather than *ἀποκαλύπτω* implies more distinctly "actual present existence" (Abbott).

"Then shall the righteous blaze forth like the sun in the kingdom of my Father." Jesus (John 17:22) said in his prayer: "I have given to them the glory which thou hast given to me." Lightfoot has a fine closing word on this paragraph: "The veil which now shrouds your higher life from others, and even partly from yourselves will then be withdrawn. The world which persecutes, despises, ignores now, will then be blinded with the dazzling glory of the revelation." "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God." Then we shall see him face to face. Meanwhile we can go on living the life hid with Christ in God.

## CHAPTER X

### The New Man in Christ Exalted

### 3:5–17

We have seen that Paul substitutes the principle of the life in Christ for a mere code of regulations. Laws are necessary, but men become law-breakers in spite of good laws. The baptized life means that the Christian is seeking heaven and thinking heaven. His feet are upon the earth, but his head is with the stars. He is living like a citizen of heaven here on earth. Paul now proceeds to apply this doctrine of heavenly-mindedness in various details.

1. *Killing the Germs of Sin.* 5–7.

"Put to death therefore the members upon the earth."[1] The use of "therefore" points back to 2:20 and 3:2 where the principle of death to sin and the world is stated: "Make dead, therefore" (Abbott). "Carry out this death to the world and kill whatever is carnal in you." We each have a "twofold moral personality" (Lightfoot). Paul gives the most vivid description of his struggle in Rom. 7. The exhortation to keep on killing what is already dead seems "strange" (Peake) to us, because the fight goes on. It takes a

[1] Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. The use of νεκρώσατε rather than the stronger word θανατώσατε (Haupt) suggests that the death to sin is ideal and not yet complete.

long time to kill a snake. The death stroke has been given to sin, but the struggle goes on with hope of certain final victory through Christ. The members of our body are not evil in themselves as the Gnostics held, but sin laid hold of the bodily members with vicious tenacity. It is only when we allow our bodily appetites to drag us down that they do us harm. Jesus had said that it was better to cut off the hand or pluck out the eye than to allow them to lead us into the hell of fire (Matt. 5:29f.). Paul does not use "members" here in that literal sense, but only figuratively as the instruments of the carnal mind. Paul did not, of course, know the modern germ theory of disease, but sin is infectious and contagious. Pasteur is the greatest Frenchman who ever lived because he has taught the world how to fight disease. The blood of Jesus does cleanse us from all sin and is the only antiseptic for sin.

He presents two of the common sins then and now and which ramify nearly all the other sins, licentiousness and covetousness: "Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness since it is idolatry."[2] Similar lists of the sensual vices appear in Eph. 5:3; Gal. 5:19; Rom. 1:26; 1 Thess. 4:5. The four terms for sexual uncleanness include the evil act, the evil lust, the vile result on one's life. Passion was used by the

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[2] *πορνείαν, ἀκαθαρσίαν, πάθος, ἐπιθυμίαν κακήν, καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν ἥτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλατρία.* These accusatives are probably in apposition with *μέλη* though a harsh construction (instruments and activities). Lightfoot takes them to be accusatives by anticipation after *ἀπόθεσθε* in verse 8, surely a strained construction. The four words for impurity present merely various aspects of the same sin. Aristotle employs *πάθος* of any passive emotion. *ἀκαθαρσία* is a general term, *πορνεία* a definite sin, while *ἐπιθυμία* has the adjective *κακή*. *ἥτις* here is really causal.

Greeks for other sins also and rather on the passive side, including all ungovernable affections while evil desire extends to all evil longings. There was dire need of this warning as we know from the life of the ancients in Egypt, Babylon, Antioch, Corinth, Athens, Rome. "Impurity and covetousness may be said to divide between them nearly the whole domain of human selfishness and vice" (Lightfoot). In Eph. 5:3 Paul couples these two vices, "fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness." The word for covetousness is not necessarily evil. It only means having more, the itch to get more, but there lies the peril. That is what makes the love of money "a root of all evils"[3] (1 Tim. 6:10). The word covetousness is sometimes used of uncleanness as in Eph. 4:19 "with greediness," but here Paul plainly means that love of money which comes to be "idolatry" as we speak of "worshiping the almighty dollar." Lightfoot notes that adultery is both robbery and impurity as in 1 Thess. 4:6. In Eph. 5:5 Paul calls the covetous man an idolater.[4] "Gold provided the means for indulging these lustful passions" (Peake). Hence lust and money are linked together. Jesus had called mammon the money-god which many served (Matt. 6:24). The Pharisees were "lovers of money"[5] (Luke 16:14) and took offence at Jesus because of it.

"Because of which things comes the anger of God."[6]

[3] *ῥίζα πάντων τῶν κακῶν.* Note absence of article with *ῥίζα.*

[4] *πλεονέκτης ὅ ἐστιν εἰδωλολάτρης.*

[5] *φιλάργυροι.*

[6] *διὰ ἃ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ θεοῦ.* In Eph. 5:6 we have *ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας.* Most documents have these words here also, but they are absent in B and the Sahidic Version. D has them in a smaller hand.

The modern way of condoning sin finds no support from Paul. Immorality some men call living one's life or finding one's affinity, but Paul brands these evils with their real names. Men excuse covetousness and stinginess as business thrift or laying up for a rainy day. Paul terms it idolatry. And the anger of God is sure to come for these sins in due time. One does not have to live long to see the terrible retribution that comes in this life for sins of lust and greed. Avarice as a religion dries up the soul, and sexual vice rots both soul and body. In due time the world sees the fruit of both sins in the victims.

"In which (sins) you also walked once when you used to live in these things."[7] They had been like the other heathen in their vile way of living as shown in Rom. 1:18–32. The anger of God had come upon the whole heathen world because of these sins. It was there still. In Eph. 2:3 Paul referred to the companionship of sinful men, but here he has in mind the sins themselves. Even today the heathen wince when the lid is taken off as in "Mother India." But Juvenal and Tacitus, not to say Horace and Ovid, laid bare the vices of the Roman world in language more blazing than the words of Paul.

2. *Putting off the Old Man.* 8 and 9.

"But now do you also put off from yourselves the whole group of vices."[8] He means all vices of what-

[7] ἐν οἷς καὶ ὑμεῖς περιεπατήσατέ ποτε ὅτε ἐζῆτε ἐν τούτοις. Note the imperfect tense ἐζῆτε. τούτοις here is the right text.

[8] νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόθεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα. So νυνὶ in sharp contrast with ποτε ὅτε ἐζῆτε. The effective aorist imperative middle is ἀπόθεσθε.

ever kind. See a similar list of sins in Eph. 4:22–31. Here Paul apparently refers to the sins already mentioned with a forward glance at those that follow. It is the figure of discarding these sins like an old worn-out garment that one will no longer wear. Lay them aside for good, as we say. "The errors of the past suggest the obligations of the present" (Lightfoot). The obligation rests upon the Colossians as upon all Christians. This group of pagan sins seems wonderfully modern. "Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, shameful speech out of your mouth; stop lying to one another."[9] The word for "anger" expresses a more or less settled state, that for "wrath" an explosive outburst. Both are bad enough and eat as a canker into the soul. Our word "mad" is used either for explosions of wrath or for insanity, and the two ideas are really akin. The word for "malice" is plain badness of heart, an evil habit of mind, malignity against one, "the vicious nature which is bent on doing harm to others" (Lightfoot). "Blasphemy" can be either against God or men or both. "Shameful speech" may be filthy unclean talk as in Eph. 5:4, salacious *double entendre* in which some men delight, smutty stories, slimy details. But the word is also used for abusive language as is common in Greek writers. Lightfoot argues for a combination of both ideas here, "foul-mouthed abuse." Certainly such a thing does occur, as many a wife can testify when a drunken husband comes

[9] ὀργήν, θυμόν, κακίαν, βλασφημίαν, αἰσχρολογίαν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν. μὴ ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους. These loose accusatives are explanatory of πάντα. Paul changes to a verb when it comes to lying and uses μὴ and the present imperative for stopping what they were doing or for not having the habit of lying.

home. Paul is horrified that such speech should come out of the mouth of a follower of Christ. Jesus had said that out of the heart are the issues of life, and James had spoken of bitter and sweet words coming out of the same mouth, praising God and cursing men, like two kinds of water out of the same fountain. A filthy mouth (profanity and obscenity) is repulsive to the last degree. The prohibition against lying is sharpened by the change to the verbal construction. It is distressing to think that Christians need to be urged to speak the truth, but travelers in the orient today find that the ancient Cretans have survivors as liars. Paul gathers up the idea in the repeated metaphor together with another of which he is fond, that of the old man of sin and the new man in Christ. He mixes the metaphors, to be sure, of clothing and humanity, but his idea is clear and forceful, "putting off the old man together with his deeds."[10] Other instances besides Colossians of the use by Paul of putting off and putting on are 1 Thess. 5:8; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 13:12f.; Eph. 6:11, 14. The figure of the old man of sin is bold and powerful and thoroughly Pauline. We have it also in Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22. Paul uses also the metaphor of the outward man and the inward man as in 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16. In 1 Pet. 3:4 we find the hidden man of the heart. Here Paul insists that we have not really put off the old man unless we do it

[10] ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ. Note the double compound as in 2:15, put clean off. Lightfoot argues that the participles here are synchronous with the imperatives and not causal, though either makes good sense. The aorist tense means to put off once for all. Note παλαιὸν means ancient, from of old, not aged as γεραιός would be.

"with his deeds." In Gal. 5:24 he calls it a crucifixion of the flesh with its passions and lusts. Piety is not a mask to put on or off at will. The life in Christ goes into the web and woof of the heart itself. "Nothing foul, nothing foolish must pass your lips" (M. Jones). But it is merely a negative proceeding to put off the old man, difficult and important as that is.

3. *Putting on the New Man.* 10 and 11.

"And putting on yourselves the new man who is being renewed unto full knowledge after the image of the one who created him."[11] Put on once as at conversion the new (young) man in Christ, "the regenerate man formed after Christ" (Lightfoot). It is the new creature in Christ of which Paul speaks[12] in 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15. This new creature has eternal youth and is never effete or decayed. He is never an antique and is never decrepit with age. The present passive participle[13] expresses continuous or linear action and means that the process is always going on towards the full or perfect knowledge which is the goal of God's purpose in creating us in his image (Gen. 1:26, 28) to which passage Paul's language plainly points as he does in Eph. 4:24.[14] "This reference however does not

[11] *καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν.* Note the middle aorist participle *ἐνδυσάμενοι* like *ἀπεκδυσάμενοι* which either carries on the imperative idea or is causal with *μὴ ψεύδεσθε.* In Eph. 4:24 Paul uses *καινός* which denotes quality as fresh, while here he has *νέος* which refers to one as young, not yet old or aged. But by *ἀνακαινούμενον* he gives both ideas.

[12] *καινὴ κτίσις.*

[13] *ἀνακαινούμενον.*

[14] *τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα.*

imply an identity of the creation of Genesis, but only an analogy between the two. The spiritual man in each believer's heart, like the primal man in the beginning of the world, was created after God's image" (Lightfoot). Self must be slain and a new nature obtained if one is to live this new life in Christ. "Where there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ is all things and in all things."[15] By "where" Paul means the spiritual region into which the regenerate man finds himself. Here race, national, class distinctions do not exist. Lightfoot urges that "cannot exist" is the necessary meaning. That is probably putting it too strong, though the idiom may be so understood (1 Cor. 6:5; Gal. 3:28; Jas. 1:17). In Gal. 3:28 Paul makes a like enumeration and affirmation of the freedom in Christ. Then he adds the abolition of sex distinctions in Christ, while here he mentions only the racial and religious prerogative (Greek and Jew, barbarian, Scythian, circumcision and uncircumcision) and the social caste (bond and free). Paul had fought his battle for Gentile freedom against the Judaizers and had won it. He glories in the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Greek in Christ (Eph. 2). So Paul here confronts the Gnostics in Colossae of Essenic or Pharisaic type with the defiant challenge that both "Greek and Jew" are at home with Christ, both the circumcision and the uncircumcision. In Rom.

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[15] ὅπου οὐκ ἔνι Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δοῦλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν χριστός. Note ἔνι instead of ἔστιν after οὐκ. It is the Ionic form of ἐν (ἐνί). πᾶσιν is neuter plural like πάντα.

1: 14 Paul confesses his obligation to preach to both Greeks and barbarians. From the standpoint of the Greeks all others were barbarians. There were grades among the barbarians and the Scythians came at the bottom of the ladder, barbarians of the lowest type. But Christ came to save them also as we have seen shown in the Fiji Islands and in other cannibal regions. The Jew divided all the world into Jews and Greeks, the Romans like the Greeks into Greeks and barbarians, the privileged and the unprivileged classes. Greek in contrast with Jew means merely Gentile. From the standpoint of the Greeks the Romans were barbarians and only gradually did they remove that stigma by power and culture. Max Müller has said that Christ was the first to blot out the word barbarian from his vocabulary. The word probably originally meant one who spoke an inarticulate unintelligible stammering language. Christ has placed "brother" in the place of "barbarian." Max Müller also observes that neither Plato nor Aristotle uses the word "humanity" and adds: "I therefore date the real beginning of the science of language from the first day of Pentecost." The Roman Empire had millions of slaves, how many no one knows. Many of these slaves[16] were captives taken in war and were more cultured than their masters. They were treated as cattle and other property. A few were set free for a price. The papyri give numerous examples of the sale of slaves. Those set free were called freedmen with an allusion to the fact that they had once been slaves. Epictetus was a freedman and

[16] δοῦλοι. Bond slaves from δέω to bind.

it is possible that Luke was. But the real "freemen"[17] had not been slaves. Christ broke down all class distinctions and in the Christian church master and slave met together and the offices were open to the slaves. Christ brought a ray of hope to all the world of slaves. Today slavery is nearly dead as an institution outside of Mohammedan and pagan lands. One of the supreme tragedies of the World War is precisely this that pagan lands saw so-called Christian peoples engaged in a death struggle for world mastery. Certainly some Christian leaders slipped a cog somewhere to precipitate such a conflict for world empire. And in the present struggles between labor and capital we see the same absence of the Christian spirit. "It may be that the contempt of the Greek for every race but his own was working havoc at Colossae" (M. Jones). "The Church of Christ is the one sphere in which the best educated and most polished thinker occupies no pride of place as compared with his ignorant and unlearned brother, who has cultivated the humble virtues that are inherent in the religion of Christ" (*Ibid.*).

Paul sums up his argument with the pregnant phrase that "Christ is all and in all." Christ compasses everything and is to be allowed his place everywhere and in everything. "Christ occupies the whole sphere of human life and permeates all its developments" (Lightfoot). There are no reservations from which Christ is excluded. There is no room here for the Gnostic intellectual pride. Paul finds no reason for the Gnostic arrogance and seclusiveness. Christ makes a freeman

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[17] ἐλεύθεροι. From ἔρχομαι to go at all times as one wishes.

out of a slave, a gentleman out of a Scythian. Christ is everything.

4. *The Graces of the New Man.* 12–14.

Paul carries on the figure of the new man and of putting him on as a new garment. "Put on therefore as elect of God, holy and beloved."[18] They had put on the new man. Now put on the virtues and graces that belong to the new man, just as they had put off the old man with his doings. Since Christ is all and in all for you, show in your individual lives the graces and virtues of Christ. They are the new Israel, the elect of God (see Rom. 9–11), a holy nation, a royal people. Paul employs endearing terms that belong to God's chosen ones, holy as they should be, beloved as they already were, the consecrated people of God. One of Paul's great contributions to Christian truth is the proof in Galations and Romans that believers in Christ are the true chiidren of Abraham, the truly elect, the called and the redeemed. So here he pours out his heart to the Colossians as belonging to the true line of the faithful to adorn their holy profession.

He gives a glorious list of virtues that they must have. Alexander Maclaren calls them "the garments of the renewed soul." The virtues here commended by Paul are the exact opposites of the vices just condemned, social graces, not social sins. Stalker has a striking book of sermons on the Seven Deadly Sins and one also on the Seven Cardinal Virtues. The ancients, Stoics in particular, were fond of making lists

[18] *ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ ἠγαπημένοι.* Same middle voice of *ἐνδύσασθε* and note *οὖν* resumptive (verse 10)

of vices and virtues. "A heart of compassion."[19] This Greek word like the Latin *viscera* was used of the nobler inward parts (heart, liver, lungs) and was considered the seat of the emotions like our word heart today. Tenderness and sympathy are in the new man in Christ. But "kindness"[20] comes next. Peake suggests that it is "almost sweetness of disposition" even when there is no call for pity. It is the proper Christian temper in our relation to others, that goodness of heart that makes us act rightly in dealings with each other. In Tit. 3:4 it is connected with philanthropy and in Rom. 11:22 with the severity[21] of God. See further Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:7. "Humility"[22] points to one's estimate of himself. This word here means lowliness of mind and not the mock-humility of Col. 2:18. The ancients did not consider this a virtue at all, but rather a vice. Jesus exalted humility and pointed out the perils of self-conceit in a number of parables and applied it to himself (Matt. 11:29). Jesus has lifted what men called low (or even "low-down") to the heights of the lowly in heart and life. It is rather odd, as M. Jones observes, that the Canterbury revisers translate the same word by "humility" here in Col. 3:12, by "lowliness" in Eph. 4:2, and by "lowliness of mind" in Phil. 2:3. But this grace is opposed to haughtiness. "Meekness"[23] is

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[19] *σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ.* Literally bowels of mercy. We no longer use "bowels" in this sense.

[20] *χρηστότητα.* From *χρηστός* and that from *χράομαι.* So something useful, good, kind.

[21] *ἀποτομία.*

[22] *ταπεινοφροσύνη.*

[23] *πραύτητα.* A late form of *πραότης.*

a difficult grace for us to understand because the word in English has lost part of its flavor. It is more than mere gentleness and has the element of strength as is seen in Moses and in Jesus who are called meek. It is the opposite of rudeness. It is an attribute of Christ and is shown in our dependence on God. (Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Tim. 2:25). Peter exhorted humility under the mighty hand of God (1 Pet. 5:5f.) and that attitude will compel meekness in our dealings with our fellow-men (Gal. 5:23; Eph. 4:2). Harshness is not a garment that suits the Christian's wardrobe. "Long-suffering" [24] is the opposite of malice or resentment or revenge. We see longsuffering in God's forbearance with us (Rom. 2:2; 9:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15). It is not a great thing to ask of us, therefore, that we stand the troubles and difficulties that come upon us without giving out like a runner out of wind. Theophylact shrewdly says that the meek man does not get angry soon, the long-suffering man does not get angry at all. James urges long-suffering in vivid words (Jas. 5:7–11). And now Paul drops the abstract substantives and adds two vivid concrete participles to illustrate these social virtues in action: "Forbearing one another." [25] The verb means literally "holding yourselves back from one another," when tempted to break loose and fly at one another. The same idiom occurs in Eph. 4:2, only there Paul adds

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[24] *μακροθυμίαν.* From *μακρό-θυμος*, long-tempered, long-wind (*θέω*, to run).

[25] *ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων.* Direct middle participle with ablative case.

"in love." Without love they will not exercise this noble self-restraint and hold themselves back from word or deed. It is a favorite defence now for murderers to plead temporary emotional insanity as the explanation of the murder. That may be true, but it is murder all the same. "And forgiving one another, if one keeps on having a complaint against one."[26] Whether the complaint is a real ground or not is not the question. The only way to end the fault-finding (archaic "quarrel" in the Authorized Version) is to forgive it, let it drop. Love covers a multitude of sins as we throw the mantle of love over the sinner (1 Pet. 4:8). But Paul clinches the point with the example of Christ. "As the Lord also forgave you, so also do you."[27] In Eph. 4:32 we have it that "God in Christ forgave you" (cf. Gal. 3:6; Col. 2:13). The Lord here certainly means Christ. Jesus claimed the right to forgive sin when challenged by the Pharisees (Mark 2:10 = Matt. 9:6 = Luke 5:24). Jesus also urged that we must forgive one another their trespasses and debts toward us before we can properly ask God to forgive us (Matt. 6:11–15).

But Jesus has a crowning climax for these heavenly graces for the Christian's garment. "And upon all these graces put on love which is a girdle of perfect-

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[26] *καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς ἐάν τις πρός τινα ἔχῃ μομφήν.* Note change of case, ablative to dative, and *ἑαυτοῖς* rather than *ἀλλήλοις*, reflexive rather than reciprocal pronoun just as in Eph. 4:32. Double use of *τις* and present subjunctive *ἔχῃ* continued action.

[27] *καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς.* The verb is from *χάρις* and means to show a favor to one. Dative case *ὑμῖν*. *καθὼς—οὕτως* relative and correlative adverbs. Note *καὶ* in both clauses answering to one another as is often the case. *ὁ κύριος* reading of A B D and probably correct rather than *ὁ χριστὸς*.

ness."[28] In Eph. 4:2 "in the bond of peace" the word for "bond" is the same as here, but it is not there used with the metaphor of clothing as here. One could think of an overcoat or wrap as Paul's idea, for he certainly carries on the metaphor of clothing. But the ancients wore the girdle so frequently that it is more than probable that Paul has this figure in mind. All the other garments are held together in place and in proper relation to one another by the girdle that made for speed and service. At any rate it is love that binds together the whole, whether as girdle or as wrap. "Love binds the virtues into a harmonious whole" (Abbott). One is reminded of Paul's great prose poem on love in 1 Cor. 13, where all else without love comes to nothing. See also Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14. Love is "the power which unites and holds together all those graces and virtues, which together make up perfection" (Lightfoot). M. Jones thinks rather that the point of perfection comes in the fact that love holds the believers together in one body and so leads to perfection. Haupt so explains the genitive as one of apposition and is followed by Peake. But I prefer the idea of Lightfoot: "Love is the outer garment which holds the others in their places." In Eph. 6:10–20

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[28] ἐπὶ πᾶσι δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅ ἐστιν σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος. Note ἐπί with the locative. ὅ is neuter and does not agree in gender with either ἀγάπην or σύνδεσμος, the idea being "which thing", though referring to ἀγάπην (feminine). See the same construction in Eph. 5:5 πλεονέκτης ὅ ἐστιν εἰδωλολάτρης. See also Mk. 12:42; 15:42. Σύνδεσμος is a bond that unites and holds together. So applied to the figure of clothing I venture to suggest "girdle". For ἐπὶ πᾶσιν see Luke 3:20, only here it is not "in addition to", but upon or over.

Paul gives the armor of God, the panoply of grace with which to meet the darts of the enemy of souls.

5. *Christ's Peace as Umpire in the Heart.* 15.

Even the saints need the peace which alone Christ can give. Jesus had left his peace as a legacy to the disciples (John 14:27). "For he is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). The Textus Receptus has here "the peace of God." But ℵ B C D all read "the peace of Christ" which is correct. In Phil. 4:7 "peace of God" is correct. "And let the peace of Christ keep on acting as umpire in your hearts."[29] It is the metaphor of contest here as in 1 Cor. 9:24; Phil. 3:14. "Wherever there is a conflict of motives or impulses or reasons, the peace of Christ must step in and decide which is to prevail" (Lightfoot). Polybius, Philo, Josephus employed this same metaphor of the umpire where there is a conflict of internal motives and the decision is rendered by some paramount consideration, the deciding argument as we say. Peake and Abbott think that the word here in Paul has lost its old sense of umpire and merely means rule. But why? Paul certainly was familiar with the athletic games where umpires were used. In the Wisdom of Solomon 10:12 we have this same verb as here: "Over his sore conflict he watched as judge." In 2 Thess. 3:16 Paul prays: "May the Lord of peace himself give you peace always in every place." Christ is the Lord of peace and he will give peace to each of us in the midst of and in spite of all

[29] *καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ χριστοῦ βραβευέτω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν.* It is the subjective genitive, *χριστοῦ*, the peace that Christ gives. *βραβευέτω* is from *βραβεύς* umpire. See *καταβραβευέτω* in Col. 2:18.

the clanging passions of our complex natures. He can break the complex that holds us fast and give calmness. So then, pleads Paul, let the peace that Christ gives cast the deciding vote in our struggles. We shall never go wrong in that case.

"Unto which you were also called in one body."[30] In peace God has called us (1 Cor. 7:15). You were called for the very purpose of having and showing this peace of Christ. In Eph. 4:3f. Paul urged that they "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; one body and one spirit, as (also) you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all and in all." His words are fewer here in Colossians, but the point is the same. It must be said, however, that the point of Paul here as of Christ in John 17, is unity, not organic union. They had organic union, but lacked unity of spirit. "Disunion in the body is incompatible with the peace of individual members" (Peake). That is true, but one must recall Paul's plea for diversity of gifts in the body of Christ in 1 Cor. 12 as meant for harmony, not hostility. Besides, here Paul has in mind the local church in Colossae as the body where the peace of Christ should act as umpire, first in the individual heart and life, then in the church. Unity in the whole body of Christ is much to be desired, a far more crying need than one organic union of the various sections of modern Christianity. "And keep on becoming thankful,"[31] Paul adds. It is a perpetual struggle to become thankful, especially when

[30] *εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι.* Note *ἐν*, not *εἰς*.
[31] *καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε.* Note *γίνεσθε*, not *γένεσθε* nor *ἐστέ*.

we desired blessings that did not come in the form or in the measure that we desired. The ideal is not yet reached. It is a continuous process. Keep on becoming more thankful. The word is here alone in the New Testament or Septuagint, but common in the ancient writers either as pleasurable or thankful. So our English word "grateful" has these two meanings. The Frenchman has added to gratitude the lively sense of favors about to be received. "Forget yourselves in thanksgiving toward God" (Lightfoot). Paul was fond of the word gratitude (1 Thess. 5:18). He used the verb[32] twenty-five times, the substantive[33] twelve times though this adjective only once.

6. *The Home for Christ's Word.* 16 and 17.

"Let the word of Christ make its home in you richly in all wisdom."[34] It is the word that Christ speaks, subjective genitive. This happens to be the only time in the New Testament that we find the phrase "the word of Christ," though usually "the word of God" and "the word of the Lord," as in 1 Thess. 1:8; 4:15. In Acts 18:5 Paul "devoted himself to the word"[35] (probably preaching). The gospel of Christ is the usual interpretation of the phrase here in Colossians, though Lightfoot takes it to be the presence of Christ in the heart "as our inward monitor." That is the idea in 1 John 2:14 "the word of God abides in you" and in 1 John 1:10. In Luke 8:11 the word of God is

[32] εὐχαριστέω.

[33] εὐχαριστία.

[34] ὁ λόγος τοῦ χριστοῦ ἐνοικείτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ. Note the present tense of ἐνοικείτω.

[35] συνείχετο τῷ λόγῳ. Direct middle and dative.

the teaching of the sower. In Col. 1:28 Paul spoke of his teaching every man and goes on with that idea here. He desires that the word of Christ may have a continual home in the hearts of the Colossians, not just among them, but in them as individuals and "richly." It is to be "not with a scanty foothold, but with a large and liberal occupancy" (Eadie). He explains "richly" by "in all wisdom" and by the participles that follow. Bengel, Haupt, etc., take the phrase not with "dwell," but with the participles, though needlessly. The ideas all flow into one another naturally.

Teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, with grace singing in your hearts to God."[36] In Col. 1:28 Paul employed both these verbs with the same idea as here. But he adds the note of Christian song. We must not forget that "psalmody and hymnody were highly developed in the religious services of the Jews at this time" (Lightfoot). It was only natural that the Christians should follow their example in their public worship. It is possible that 1 Tim. 3:16 is a fragment of one of these early Christian hymns to Christ. See also Eph. 5:14. In their public worship we thus see that the early Chris-

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[36] διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτούς, ψαλμοῖς, ὕμνοις, ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ἐν χάριτι ᾄδοντες ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν τῷ θεῷ. Probably these participles are used absolutely as imperatives as in other hortatory passages (Rom. 12:9ff.; Eph. 4:2f.; Heb. 13:5). Note both διδάσκω and νουθετέω as in Col. 1:28. The leading idea in ψαλμός is the musical accompaniment, and of ὕμνος is praise to God, while ᾠδή is the general word for song "whether accompanied or unaccompanied" (Lightfoot). All three words may be used for the same song of praise. It is uncertain whether ἐν χάριτι goes with ᾄδοντες or the preceding words. Correct text is plural ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις and τῷ θεῷ, not τῷ κυρίῳ.

tians had instruction and prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:43–47) and praise to God. There would be spontaneous effusions of song beyond a doubt and they would make use of the Old Testament Psalms to which they were accustomed, if Jews. "Every great spiritual revival in the Christian Church has been accompanied by a corresponding outbreak and development of Christian hymnology, and this phenomenon was a conspicuous feature in the first age of the Church's history, with its vivid enthusiasm and its never-ceasing consciousness of the wonder and delight produced by the marvellous achievements of the Spirit of God" (M. Jones). But the external manifestations, wonderful as they were, "must be accompanied by the inward emotion" (Lightfoot), "singing with grace in your hearts." Else it was all a performance and might be mere bedlam. Today Christian hymns demand two things above all else. They must express real emotion of the heart, adoration and worship. They must do it in a way worthy of our Saviour God and not be mere spiritual jazz. Henry Van Dyke says that jazz is for morons. This praise mingled with instruction was dignified and ennobling and far removed from jigs and jazz. But it was not stiff and formal and perfunctory lip-service. It came from the heart and was full of adoration and thanksgiving. There is nothing in public worship in our churches more noble and uplifting than making melody in the heart unto God. That would rule out solos by unconverted singers. It would rule out pious jigs that affect the feet more than the heart.

"And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the

Father through him."[37] Do whatever you do in the spirit of the Lord Jesus, not by the mere use of his name as a magic charm as the Jewish exorcists did in Ephesus (Acts 19:13ff.). The Lord Jesus is the center of the disciple's life. So Paul reiterates that idea throughout the Epistle (3:18, 20, 22, 23, 24). The manuscripts vary greatly here whether Lord Jesus, Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus Christ, and some have "and" between "God" and "Father" as is usual (Eph. 5:20, for instance). Once more Paul sounds the note of gratitude to God our Father. We can do it through Christ whatever our task may be. *Laborare est orare.* In Rom. 12:1 and 2 Paul made a plea for consecration of all that is in us to the service of God. The work even of the slave is ennobled to the plane of worship, if our will has it so. To some worship is work and drudgery. To the right-minded work of any kind, real work, is not drudgery, but worship. The ring of the hammer may echo the music in the heart to God through Christ, if there is music in the heart. The curse of work may become the crown of glory to us, if we do it as unto the Lord.

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[37] καὶ πᾶν ὅτι ἐὰν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ θεῷ πατρὶ δι αὐτοῦ. Note the absence of the principal verb (supply ποιεῖτε or ποιοῦντες), presence of both πᾶν and πάντα, use of ἐὰν = ἄν, present tense of the subjunctive ποιῆτε (indefinite relative clause), absence of the article with πατρὶ. πᾶν is usually explained as the nominative absolute like Mt. 10:32; Luke 12:10.

## CHAPTER XI

### The Social Obligations of the New Man in Christ

### 3:18–4:1

1. *Not a Modern Discovery.*

It is not a new discovery to know that Christianity teaches social obligations to our neighbors and to the whole world. A library has been written on the social teachings of Jesus. Neither Jesus nor Paul employs the modern technical terms in teaching these problems, but the heart of the problem is in the teaching of Jesus, and Paul rightly interprets here the mind of Christ. Perfunctory theological and ecclesiastical doctrines did for long obscure the plain duties of every day life on the part of Christians in the home, in church, in business, in politics, in world relations. The neglect of these vital practical matters by ministers whose main interest was theological or ecclesiastical, made the way for William Booth's Salvation Army and for the Rescue Missions in our large cities. It is true that modern attempts to do work left undone by the churches is in response to and an expression of the Christian spirit. The Community Chest programs in our cities are partly a result of the community work during the World War and enable whole communities to function

effectively in alleviating human need in the city life. Paul was keenly alive to the practical application of the gospel message to the actual life of each believer. Christianity to Paul was vital in its relation to Christ as the source of it and in its expression in one's actual living day by day. The tendency today with some is to put social activity in the place of doctrine, an utter perversion of Paul's position, the greatest theologian of all time. True humanitarianism is the fruit of Christianity, not on a par with it nor a substitute for it. The worship of humanity is not to be substituted for the worship of Christ. But Jesus himself made our conduct toward those in need a test of our attitude toward him and a proof of the new life in him (Matt. 7 and 25). "By their fruits you shall know them." Mere words will not answer at the Judgment when Jesus as Judge divides the sheep from the goats. This position of Jesus is precisely what we find in the Epistle of James and the Epistle to the Romans. Real Christianity is both a doctrine and a life. Mere belief is dead without life as proof. Real spiritual life is impossible without vital contact with God in Christ. Our dealings with others is the final proof of our real connection with Christ. Paul recognizes the family as the seat of happiness among men. The Gnostics by their notions of asceticism or of license struck at this citadel of civilization, as the home has many enemies today who are seeking to overthrow it by free love, companionate marriage, easy divorce, state rearing of children, etc. Paul recognizes the natural distinctions in the Christian family, "recognizing with a true insight the growing importance of the home and family as the

seed-plots of the Christian Church" (M. Jones). He discusses these various aspects of family life also in Eph. 5:22–6:19; Tit. 2 (cf. also 1 Pet. 2:18–3:7). "In the family Christianity has most signally displayed its power of refining, ennobling, and sanctifying earthly relationships. Indeed, one may say that domestic life, as seen in thousands of Christian homes, is purely a Christian creation, and would have been a new revelation to the heathenism of Colossae, as it is today in many a mission field" (Maclaren). In each instance it will be seen that Paul touches the sore spot, so to speak. His remarks are brief, but to the point, the very things hardest to do and that matter most of all.

2. *A Word to Wives.* 3:18.

"You wives, continue in subjection to your husbands, as it should be in the Lord."[1] Modern wives often resent Paul's teaching that the husband is the head of the family and that the wife is not his equal. Certainly Paul has in mind the ideal home and not the degraded situation so often seen. In Eph. 5:23–33 "marriage is regarded from a high and sacred point of view, as being an earthly shadow and faint adumbra-

[1] *αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν κυρίῳ.* The article with the nominative form in address is common enough in the *κοινή*. The vocative plural has the same form as the nominative. See the same idiom in Matt. 11:26; Mk. 5:41; Lu. 8:54. The article here also occurs with each class to distinguish class from class. *ὑποτάσσεσθε* is direct middle, submit yourselves, and present tense (linear action). *Ἰδίοις* of the Textus Receptus is not genuine. It is the correct text in Eph. 5:22. *Ἀνῆκεν* is imperfect according to the Greek idiom either for obligations brought over from the past like our "ought" or one that is not lived up to as in Acts 22:22. See also Eph. 5:4; Philemon 8. The word means "appropriateness" or "propriety" as also in *καθήκειν, προσήκειν.* The Greek used *ἔδει, ἐχρῆν, καλὸν ἦν* in the same way as *ἀνῆκεν* here.

tion of the union between Christ and the Church" (Maclaren). It is a curious travesty of marriage to note how some wives who make protest against the narrowness of Paul's teaching here, are the very ones who find no difficulty in submitting themselves to husbands of other women. They call it "affinity" and "love" when it is really lust and license. Wives are not asked by Paul to be in subjection to other men besides their husbands. This subjection "is appropriate in the Lord," Paul adds, a phrase that Paul finds expressive of all of life's holy relations (Eph. 4:16; 6:1; Phil. 2:19). Paul does not say that the wife is the slave of the husband. He assumes that the husband as head of the family has a head and uses it wisely. If he is a drunkard or a beast in other ways, the wife is surely not to be in subjection to such a husband, a blockhead, a dunderhead, a dope-fiend. Free love is not one of the wife's privileges any more than it is of the husband. Their obligations and duties are reciprocal and meet their highest plane only where love reigns and each strives to be worthy of the other and faithful to the other. The subjection of the wife to the husband is not that of heedless, unthinking, whimsical obedience, but co-operation for the good of the family. The mere promise to "obey" counts for little in the marriage ceremony, if it is not based on intelligence and love. Christ has set us free from mere bondage to legalism as a means of salvation, but Christ desires order and stability in the home. Surely the larger proportion of divorces in the United States today emphasizes the importance of the words of Paul to

wives and to husbands. No new freedom in modern life can justify free love or easy divorce.

3. *A Word to Husbands.* 3:19.

"You husbands, keep on loving your wives, and stop being bitter toward them."[2] In Greek the same word means either man (as opposed to woman) and husband, as likewise the same word in Greek means either woman or wife. These two commands to husbands explain a great deal of marital unhappiness. When courting his sweetheart before marriage to win her the man was profuse in his lovemaking, but after marriage the manifestations often cease. The love-making stops because the love ceases. Coldness takes the place of warm affection. Bitterness drives out sweetness or there is the bitter-sweet that breaks many a wife's heart. Bengel calls it *odium amori mixtum,* too strong perhaps, and yet the word "bitter" is like the taste of vinegar or gall. Plutarch says that it shows weakness of mind when men are bitter toward women. Abbott suggests "cross" for "bitter," but either word reveals a harshness of temper that is responsible for much misery and that leads to divorce under the plea of incompatibility of temper. When the husband lets another man steal away his wife's affection, he may question himself to see if he is not responsible by having ceased to make love to his own wife. He has ceased to look on her and treat her as his sweetheart. Keep on courting your wife, says Paul, making love to her as at the first and

[2] οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτάς πικραίνεσθε is middle voice, show yourselves bitter. The Greeks used this verb for sharpness of temper.

more so as the years go by. It is useless to call your wife "honey," if you act like vinegar towards her. Harshness and cruelty of the husband cause tragedy in the home, as restraint and tenderness make love grow dearer with the years. Whether the daily papers keep us posted about it more than formerly or not, one gets the impression that husbands kill their wives and wives their husbands more often than in a previous age. But, however that is, prohibition has greatly reduced the number of drunken husbands who have made home a hell for their wives. Sober husbands and sober wives are worth all that it costs to enforce prohibition in the land.

4. *A Word to Children.* 3:20.

"You children, keep on obeying your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord."[3] In Eph. 6:1 Paul adds the special promise in the fifth commandment. He here lays down the general rule. There are exceptions, of course, where "the all things" do not apply. Jesus mentions one, for instance, if father or mother is hostile to Christ and seeks to keep the child from coming to Christ (Luke 14:26). If parents step in between God and the child, they have usurped God's prerogative and the child must obey God. Today in China, India, and Japan, precisely that alternative is common enough. But in most cases with us the peril is that the child will too soon throw off parental control and obedience to God at the same time. There

[3] *τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν κατὰ πάντα, τοῦτο γὰρ εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν ἐν κυρίῳ.* Note *ἐν κυρίῳ* again. Textus Receptus has *τῷ κυρίῳ. εὐάρεστον* is used absolutely here as in Rom. 12:2

are rebellious children who assume or admit their superiority to their parents, and who flaunt in their faces their independence and determination to have their own way about everything, be the consequences what they may. It is sometimes true that children are wiser than their parents, fortunately so, but these are not the headstrong willful ones who break the hearts of devout fathers and mothers. It is a terrible responsibility to have children and then turn them loose in the city streets while the parents go to roadhouses and show the children how to go to the devil. Beyond a doubt modern college boys and girls are better than they used to be, though they still have heavy handicaps in the example of their elders and in new temptations helped on by the automobile and the "movies" and the free mingling of the sexes. There are schools of crime in the large cities, and the average age of criminals is now under twenty-one. The unregulated child goes down rapidly as is seen in modern Russia, where the absence of home control and the use of narcotics is playing havoc with child life. That brilliant Frenchman, Max O'Rell, said a generation ago that America seemed to him to be the land of obedient parents. In the United States children do have more freedom than in most European countries, and some children make a joke of "Bringing Up Father." Too much and too strict regulations in the home cause violent rebellion and reaction to evil. Unregulated lives lead to crime and disaster. It is an old-fashioned notion that Paul presents, but he is not far from the heart of the problem as we have it today. If the child's love can be won and held, obedience will be rendered easy and given gladly. Cer-

tainly filial obedience is beautiful, and "this is right" Paul adds in Eph. 1:1. "No doubt, the moral sentiment of Paul's age stretched parental authority to the extreme, and we need not hesitate to admit that the Christian idea of a father's power and a child's obedience has been much softened by Christianity; but the softening has come from the greater prominence given to love, rather than from the limitation given to obedience" (Maclaren). The child that revolts at being tied to his mother's apron strings is one who knows little of the depths of the mother's love and yearning. The over-indulgent father may even ruin his son's career from the very softness of his own loving heart. "By many parents this advice is needed—consult your children, command them more" (Maclaren).

5. *A Word to Fathers.* 3:21.

"You fathers, stop irritating your children that they may not lose heart."[4] Mothers do not nag the children as much as fathers and so are not the ones singled out here. The verb appears in 2 Cor. 9:2 in a good sense, but here it is the irritation as the result of nervous explosion on the part of the father. It is terrible when the father is no longer a hero to the child. The father may sometimes "irritate by exacting demands and perpetual fault-finding and interference for interference's sake" (Peake). The result of this bad habit is that the child's spirit is broken. The child loses heart and

[4] οἱ πατέρες, μὴ ἐρεθίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἀθυμῶσιν. Eph. 6:4 has παροργίζετε instead of ἐρεθίζετε. Many mss. follow Eph. 6:4 here, but B syr are probably correct in reading ἐρεθίζετε here. ἀθυμῶσιν is present subjunctive and means without heart or spirit (ἀ privative and θυμός).

becomes spiritless. Bengel puts it thus: *Tractus animus pestis juventutis.* Indeed, a broken spirit is sometimes the plague of youth. If the child is given the inferiority complex, he will have difficulty in overcoming it and taking his true place in the world as a leader of men and a servant of God. The sorrows of children are real enough at best and should not be increased by the nervous irritability of a father or mother who merely explodes at the child from force of habit. Some children are driven from home to the perils of the city, where they go down into the vortex of ruin without friends to help them. Others are driven to sea. Some become tramps. Some commit suicide as the way out. Some even murder father or mother in desperation. There are lost boys and girls enough at best to break any one's heart without being driven from home by fathers or mothers. Sullen and morose, such children are often unhappy without ever confiding in their fathers and mothers. Happy is the boy who talks frankly with his father. Blessed is the girl who tells her mother everything, her joys and her sorrows as well. In the Græco-Roman world the fathers had power of life and death over the child, more authority than Paul allows. But fathers are responsible for the birth of their children, and cannot shirk that responsibility and obligation. The father who loves Christ will love his wife and children with his whole heart, and will find joy without limit in seeing his children grow up into full manhood in Christ Jesus. At best it is a problem how to train up a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is only possible at all when the father really loves his child and knows how

to be firm and gentle at the same time. It is easy to forget one's own childish weaknesses and to demand too much of the children. The child is father of the man. Happy is the man who can find his own childhood reproduced in his children and grandchildren. Thus a little child will lead the father back and near to the God and Father of us all. The tenderness of Jesus toward children was not understood even by the disciples, who were provoked at the mothers for bringing them to Jesus. Children are to be seen and heard and welcomed in home and heart, and should come to the table when company comes and not be kept waiting for the left-over scraps.

6. *A Word to Slaves* (*Servants*). 3:22–25.

The Greek word "slaves" used here and so often in the New Testament today we translate by "servants" because slavery as an institution no longer exists, a fact due to the Christian impulse for freedom and equality of privilege. One wishes that "slavery" as a fact no longer existed in our own land. It has vanished from legal statutes, but in some industrial conditions virtual peonage exists, industrial bondage where the employee is at the mercy or the caprice of the employer. And then the so-called "white slavery" is a problem of world-wide importance and engages the serious attention of the League of Nations. Paul is confronted by the solemn fact of slavery in the Roman Empire, and his immediate duty is to bring to bear the principles of the gospel of Christ to the lives of master and slave. These slaves were in a sense members of the family. They worked in the household, on the farm, in the

shop. Paul has wise words to Christian slaves in Eph. 6:5–8 and in 1 Tim. 6:1 and 2. In Philemon the case of Onesimus gives Paul his chance to strike at the very foundation of slavery. Paul's view there stated will ultimately overthrow the institution by the love of Christ for men as men. "In the interests of Christianity as a spiritual power social freedom had to be cheerfully foregone till the new religion was able to assert its principle with success" (Peake). Here he speaks more at length. The relation of servant and master or employee and employer today involves the very same principles that Paul here enunciates. "You slaves, keep on obeying in all things your masters according to the flesh."[5] Paul devotes twice as much space here to the duties of slaves as in Ephesians and 1 Timothy, probably because of his interest in the case of Onesimus. Slavery has always been an inflammable topic, just as industrial hardships today cause economic, social, and even political upheavals in America and England. Instance the coal mines, the steel mills, the railroads, the cotton factories, the scenes of frequent strikes and dissatisfaction. The Greeks and Romans treated slaves as property, chattels, not as men and women with rights and privileges as human beings. Paul appeals to Christian slaves as to real persons open to the highest aspirations. But, if the masters make demands of the Christian slaves not right in themselves, Paul would not ask for obedience. He is assuming that the masters will not command obedience to themselves by disobedience to God or the violation of

[5] οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις. Note κυρίοις instead of δεσπόταις.

the conscience. Peter exhorts obedience even to "crooked" [6] masters (1 Pet. 18), not in their crookedness, however. Christianity by its proclamation of spiritual freedom attracted multitudes of slaves whose very number created an additional problem to the progress of the gospel. They were allowed equal privileges in the churches, some probably becoming pastors of churches and somewhat disposed to despise their masters because of this spiritual rule. Hence Paul has to exhort them not to despise their masters (1 Tim. 6:2). The masters according to the flesh were not their spiritual lords.

So Paul urges that the Christian slave have some conscience in his work, "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord." [7] If the plural is read, "acts of eye-service" after text of Westcott and Hort, emphasis is laid upon particular acts rather than the general attitude in the abstract. Paul seems to have coined this compound word. This was a common failing of slaves when the eye of the master or of the overseer was not upon them. Now, alas, there are actually employees who will hold back zealous workmen from doing more than the strict letter of the agreement, not to lay too many bricks a day, for instance. The word for men-pleasers is in the Septuagint already, and Paul has the same idea in Gal. 1:10. It is the Christian's first duty to please the

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[6] *σκολιοῖς.*

[7] *μὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλείᾳ, ὡς ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι, ἀλλ' ἐν ἁπλότητι καρδίας φοβούμενον τὸν κύριον.* ℵ K C L have *ὀφθαλμοδουλείαις* while A B D G Boh have *ὀφθαλμοδουλείᾳ* as Eph. 6:6. Certainly *κύριον*, not *θεὸν*, is correct, supported by A B C D. Eph. 6:6 has also *ὡς ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι.* See Gal. 1:10 *ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν.*

Lord, and men, even masters, come second. The singleness of heart means undivided service, loyal to the human master in so far as that is not inconsistent with reverence for the one Lord and Master Jesus Christ. He uses the same word here for Lord that he did for the human lords. Both masters and slaves have this one Lord. The Christian slave is to give this service to his master free from all duplicity, dishonesty, and false show of industry (Ellicott).

In a word, "whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the full recompense of the inheritance." [8] Slaves are held to the high ideal of exalted service to the Lord Jesus in the most menial tasks for masters or mistresses. Here is noble living to which the slaves are invited to rise superior to environment and to make their shackles wings by which to soar to fellowship with the Lord Jesus. The double compound in the word for recompense involves the idea of exact requital. Full justice will be done then by the great Lord and Master Jesus Christ whom they are really serving. "However their earthly master may reward their service, there is a Master who will give them a just recompense; although they cannot receive an earthly, He will give them a heavenly inheritance"

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[8] ὃ ἐὰν ποιῆτε, ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε, ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις, εἰδότες ὅτι ἀπὸ κυρίου ἀπολήμψεσθε τὴν ἀνταπόδοσιν τῆς κληρονομίας. Note the indefinite relative with the present subjunctive (linear action). Ἐὰν here = ἄν. Note καὶ οὐκ, not καὶ μή. The retention of μ in ἀπολήμψεσθε is the usual κοινή form. Note force of ἀπο— (back) both in the verb and in ἀνταπόδοσιν with ἀντ—also. The genitive τῆς κληρονομίας is that of apposition, the full or just recompense consists in the inheritance.

(Peake). There is a rainbow to this cloud (Rom. 8:15–17; Gal. 4:1–7).

So then "go on serving the Lord Christ; for the one who does wrong will receive back the wrong which he did, and there is no respect of persons."[9] The slave who is a Christian can serve Christ even as the master can (1 Cor. 7:22). It is not clear who the wrong-doer is in this sentence, but the point holds good whether the master or the slave does the wrong. In either case the penalty is sure to come in the very coin used by the wrong-doer. Lightfoot thinks that the warning is suggested by the case of the slave, but it is extended by Paul to the master. That is certainly true in Eph. 6:8: "Each one will receive from the Lord this very thing whatever good he does, whether slave or freeman."[10] In Philemon 18 Paul uses the very word for wrong-doing by Onesimus that he employs here in Col. 3:25. "The philosophers of Greece taught, and the laws of Rome assumed, that the slave was a chattel. But a chattel could have no rights. It would be absurd to talk of treating a chattel with justice" (Lightfoot). But this is precisely what Paul demands. Retribution will come to the slave who does wrong to his master and to the master who wrongs his slave, "and there is no respect of persons" with God. The word "respect of persons"[11] means partiality. There is no partiality

[9] *τῷ κυρίῳ χριστῷ δουλεύετε. ὁ γὰρ ἀδικῶν κομίσεται ὃ ἠδίκησεν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν προσωποληµψία.* The Textus Receptus has *γὰρ* before *κυρίῳ*. It is not certain whether *δουλεύετε* is imperative or indicative. Without *γὰρ* it is probably imperative. See Eph. 6:7; Rom. 12:11.

[10] *ἕκαστος ὅ ἂν ποιήσῃ ἀγαθὸν τοῦτο κομίσεται παρὰ κυρίου, εἴτε δοῦλος εἴτε ἐλεύθερος.*

[11] *προσωποληµψία.* From *λαµβάνω* (take) and *πρόσ-ωπον* (face), to judge by the face and so be partial.

with God, who is not a private asset of the masters to help hold slaves down, nor is God to be counted on to rescue slaves whatever sins they may commit. In 2 Cor. 5:10 Paul had said that each will get back or receive the things done in the body. The Christian slave is not to presume on his Christianity as justifying him for any wrongdoing toward his master. The master must not think that God cares most for wealth and power. In war both sides cry to the same God who holds the scales of right and justice in an even balance. There will be no partiality in the sure recompense from God.

*7. A Word to Masters.* 4:1.

This is one of the wrong chapter divisions. The new chapter should begin with 4:2, not with 4:1. After Paul's pointed words to slaves it was inevitable that he should speak to masters. "He places his finger unerringly upon the crowning evils on both sides; on the side of the slave an entire lack of conscience in his work, a service only adequately rendered when the eye of the master was upon him, and a double-dealing utterly inconsistent with honesty and fidelity to truth; on the side of the master a complete disregard of human rights and an unmerciful exploitation of oppressed humanity for his own selfish purposes. Christianity, according to St. Paul, demands an entirely new and changed standard of conduct from both parties" (M. Jones). "You masters, keep on supplying on your side justice and fairness to your slaves."[12] It is not

[12] οἱ κύριοι, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε. Note τὸ δίκαιον, what is righteous. Ἰσότητα is equality, equity, fairness. Note force of the middle voice in παρέχεσθε.

social equality that Paul has in mind here, but a square deal for the slaves. He calls on the masters to furnish on their part (middle voice) not mercy or pity, but simple justice and fair-dealing. It is even-handed impartial treatment that the master owes the slave and that most of them did not get. There were Christian masters in the South in the old slavery days who tried to be just and fair to their slaves, bad as the institution is at its best. But there were some like Legree in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* who recognized no human rights in the slaves which they owned. The Roman Empire was full of Legrees. Paul demands that Christian masters at least do the just and fair thing by their slaves as ordinary human beings. Paul is not pleading that slaves shall be treated alike. A Legree did that, and treated all of them brutally. Paul means that the Christian master shall treat his slave as a brother in Christ. That is the plea that he makes to Philemon for Onesimus. If masters through the ages had only obeyed Paul's command here, how different the history of the world would have been. And today the primary responsibility rests with the employer who engages laborers to work for him. The capitalist cannot excuse his hardness towards the men on the ground that laborers are not what they ought to be. A twelve-hour shift in a steel mill is inhuman. More dividends may be declared for the stockholders, but at bottom men are of more importance than more dollars. Most modern masters of industry are church members. It is a tragedy in the modern war between capital and labor that Christian capitalists have so often seemed to care more for making money than for the welfare of their

employees. If common justice had always been done towards laboring men, there would be no capital and labor problem. Organized labor has precisely the same legal rights as organized capital. The Golden Rule is needed in business dealings. It is needed on the part of masters of men in whatever relations they come today.

"Knowing that you also have a Lord in heaven."[13] This argument was needed by some masters. The slaves may not be able to compel justice and fairness from their masters. They may have to submit to injustice and cruelty. Even the freeman is a slave of Christ (1 Cor. 7:22). The master may indulge in caprice towards his slave; he may give vent to his violent injustice and mistreat the slave in the most inhuman fashion. The law of the land may not be able to reach such a master. But the Lord of both master and slave will have the last word to say. The master had best treat the slave as he wishes the Master and Lord to treat him. Christianity calls the slave a man and says that he may be a noble man, a brother in Christ. That idea will one day blot all slavery out of the world. Meanwhile every man stands or falls to God for his treatment of those brought in relation to him. "All masters and employers of labour, in their mills and warehouses, are bid to base their relations to 'hands' and servants on the one firm foundation of 'justice.' Paul does not say, Give your servants what is kind and patronizing. He wants a great deal more than that. Charity likes to come in and supply the

[13] εἰδότες ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔχετε κύριον ἐν οὐρανῷ. Probably the causal use of the participle. καὶ points back to the slaves. Cf. Eph. 6:9.

wants which would never have been felt had there been equity. An ounce of justice is sometimes worth a ton of charity" (Maclaren). Class revolution and class hostility would have no place and no chance to terrorize capitalists if they had always been careful to do what is right and just, what is human and fair, to their employees. A better day is coming, but there is room yet for common justice to those employed in our homes, in our stores, in our factories. We talk today more about social theories, but Paul touches the real truth in all of them, treating each other as brothers in Christ.

# CHAPTER XII

## Matters Personal

### 4:2–18

One of the remarkable things about this short Epistle is the space devoted to personal interests whereas in the longer Epistle to the Ephesians very little attention is given to such matters. Here is one proof of the general character of the Ephesian Epistle as a sort of circular letter to the churches of the province of Asia. With all his masterly grasp of theological problems, Paul felt the keenest interest in people and never got out of touch with his friends, and he had them everywhere.

1. *Prayer for the Open Door.* 2–4.

"Persevere in prayer, keeping awake in it with thanksgiving."[1] Stick to your praying and stay awake while praying. Paul is not urging long prayers, but the continuance of the habit of prayer. Dr. W. T. Grenfell tells that it was D. L. Moody's skill in London, when he gave out a hymn during a long-winded prayer, that first interested him and led soon to his conversion. God does not hear prayers because of much speaking

[1] τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτερεῖτε, γρηγοροῦντες ἐν αὐτῇ ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ. Note present tense of verb from root καρτερός (strong) with προς—. The participle γρηγοροῦντες is a late present from the perfect tense ἐγρήγορα to be awake.

(Matt. 6:7). Going to sleep during prayer is not an unknown experience. The three chosen apostles did that very thing in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus had urged them to watch and pray[2] (Matt. 26:41–43). "Long continuance in prayer is apt to produce listlessness" (Lightfoot). In 1 Thess. 5:17 Paul urged prayer without ceasing, the prayerful attitude and undertone. The importunate widow and the importunate friend in Christ's parable well illustrate perseverance in prayer. Weariness in prayer will lead to indifference. Thanksgiving is the crown of all prayers. Hence Paul's habit of thanksgiving for everything (Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17). It is "an exhortation to a hidden life of constant prayer" (Maclaren).

"Praying at the same time also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word."[3] Paul craves a place in their prayers as he had expressed his in their behalf (Col. 1:9). He may include Timothy and Epaphras in the "us" or it may be merely the literary plural. At any rate it is interesting to note the restless note here as of the eagle in bondage. For some years now Paul had been a Roman prisoner. He was granted his own hired house and the privilege of seeing his friends (Acts 28:30f.), and he used his bonds as a means of winning soldiers in the Praetorian guard (Phil. 1:13). But still he was a prisoner. He had hopes of ultimate freedom and he believed in prayer for that object (Phil. 1:19). Once he had not been able to enter all the

[2] γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε. The very words employed here by Paul.

[3] προσευχόμενοι ἅμα καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν, ἵνα ὁ θεὸς ἀνοίξῃ ἡμῖν θύραν τοῦ λόγον. Note περὶ rather than ὑπὲρ. Ingressive aorist subjunctive ἀνοίξῃ. Objective genitive τοῦ λόγου. ἅμα is like the Latin simul.

doors that sprang open to him. He knew what restlessness was when he was unwilling to remain in Troas when a door was wide open there (2 Cor. 2:13). Even in Rome God had opened doors of service for Paul, but his heart is in the hills. He longs for the east again. He wants prayer not for his personal benefit or comfort, but for the advancement of the work of the kingdom. It is pathetic to think of the number of preachers to whom the doors of service are closed for one reason or another. It is due in some cases to poor health, and that obstacle by care may be removed. It may be due to peculiar circumstances in a given field, and the minister ought to have another chance elsewhere. It may be the preacher's own fault. He may have ceased to study and so to grow. He may have made slips in morals or in temper, or laziness may be his besetting sin. Whatever the cause, it is sad to see misfits in the ministry. One may gain what comfort he may from the doors that closed upon Paul. But one must not forget that while Paul yearned for the open door, he did valiant service in Rome in spite of the chain upon his right hand. There are preachers who are anxious to preach who have no calls to churches, who are unable to go as missionaries with no support. It is a tragic situation. Even in Ephesus, where Paul had a great and mighty door open to him, there were many adversaries (1 Cor. 16:9), and Paul had to leave. If there ever was a preacher who had to face often the problem of the change of place of work, it was Paul. And yet he did the greatest work of all ministers of all time (Cf. Eph. 6:19).

"That I may speak the mystery of Christ, because of

which I am also in bonds, that I may manifest it as I ought to speak."[4] Christ is this mystery, Christ for the Gentiles. Paul is never weary of glorying in this fact (Col. 1:26) and of his relation to it (Eph. 3:1–13). It was at bottom his preaching to the Gentiles that led to his imprisonment, "because of which I am in bonds." The Jews from Ephesus in Jerusalem were angered at this renegade Jew mingling with the Gentiles as he did. Even in Jerusalem they had seen him on the street with Trophimus, a Greek, and so accused Paul of bringing Trophimus into the temple, the Jewish court, which was untrue. The Gnostics had no monopoly of mystery, but Paul's function is to "make it plain," "manifest it." That should be the purpose and the result of all preaching. It had turned out so in Rome (Phil. 1:12). Paul did not wish to darken counsel with words or to make confusion worse confounded when he preached. The burden of every real preacher is precisely this, to make plain the mystery of Christ. That is a task worthy of any man. Paul feels his responsibility and so he desires the prayers of the Colossians that he speak as he ought to speak, even while in Rome. He had to speak for he felt the "woe" on him if he did not (1 Cor. 9:16). Peter and John had said to the Sanhedrin: "We are not able not to go on speaking what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). This divine prerogative is on Paul now. He

[4] λαλῆσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ χριστοῦ, δι' ὃ καὶ δέδεμαι, ἵνα φανερώσω αὐτὸ ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι. Infinitive of purpose as often (1:26; 2:4). The mystery consisted in Christ. Note λαλῆσαι about preaching. Note the perfect passive δέδεμαι, state of bondage, literal bondage. Cf. Phil. 1:7, 13; 2 Tim. 2:9 for δεσμοί and δέσμιος often (Philemon 9). ἵνα φανερώσω probably is explanatory of the mystery.

says that he "must"[5] speak. So he asks for their prayers that he may have the fullest opportunity to speak, and then that he should speak as he should when the door opens. The old preachers used to talk of having "liberty" in preaching. Paul craves liberty both in freedom for his feet to go and for his tongue to speak the words of eternal life in Christ.

*2. Wisdom in Walk and Talk.* 5 and 6.

"Go on walking in wisdom towards those without, buying up the opportunity."[6] Walk comes before talk, for ministers as for all servants of Christ. But this walk is to be in practical Christian wisdom. Jesus had urged the disciples to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16). Paul elsewhere speaks of non-Christians as "those without" (1 Cor. 5:12, 13; 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Tim. 3:7). Believers are "those within" (1 Cor. 5:12). The Jews called Gentiles those on the outside (Josephus, *Ant.*, xv. 9.2). Those without the pale of Christianity were keenly watching the walk of believers in Christ. It has always been so and it is as true today as ever. They watch our walk more than our talk. They judge and measure our talk by our walk. The daily life of Christians is the open Bible that all men read, the Epistle of Christ known and read of all men (2 Cor. 3:2f.). The chance to win men to Christ by such wisdom in walk is like going into the market-place and buying up the chance for

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[5] δεῖ, not χρή.

[6] ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω, τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι. The use of πρὸς is not usual, facing those outside. Note καιρὸν, not χρόνον. Note the voice in ἐξαγοραζόμενοι, indirect middle, for yourselves.

yourselves. The same metaphor appears in Eph. 5:16 and in Dan. 2:8. Ramsay (*St. Paul the Traveller,* p. 149) puts the idea of this verb thus: "Making your market fully from the occasion." Every occasion is an open market of opportunity for Christ. It is so easy to let opportunities slip by unused. John A. Broadus used to say that opportunity was like a fleet horse that pauses for one moment by one's side. If you fail to mount him in that moment, you can hear the clatter of his hoofs down the corridors of time. That opportunity is gone forever. One has to pay for what he buys in the open market when others bid for the privilege. "It will sometimes cost selfish ease, personal convenience, comfort, reputation, money; in any case, in every case, however, they are to pay the price, purchase for themselves the opportunity, and save their unsaved neighbors or friends" (Gross Alexander). Time is one of our greatest assets. One of the European princes was known as "Mr. Ten Minutes Late." He never got anywhere. Business men are punctilious about engagements, for time is money. Men have lost millions of dollars because they failed to be prompt and the contract went elsewhere. One may miss a train by a minute. He may miss a life by a moment, an eternal life. We can actually gain time. We can take time by the forelock. Lost time is lost forever. Time is a test of character, an arbiter of destiny.

But talk is important also. There is a wonder in human speech. Who has not felt the witchery of words, the charm of loving words that linger in the memory like the sound of sweet bells at eventide? There are songs that melt us to tears. There are ser-

mons that move us to the depths or lift us to the skies. Modern inventions have not destroyed the power of the human voice, not the newspaper, not the phonograph, not the moving-picture. The radio has simply extended it. It is, however, easier to deliver occasional sermons than to walk wisely with keen and critical eyes watching our steps. It is easier to preach eloquent sermons than to have one's conversation seasoned with grace and "gumption." "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt."[7] "Grace" here means pleasingness or winsomeness (cf. 3:16). The ancient writers often spoke of "the grace of words." It is not alone public speech that Paul has here in mind, though that is included. Preachers and teachers are constantly prone to slips of the tongue (James 3:1f.). These should be avoided. But Paul included "conversation" also by "speech." Sweetness and courtesy in conversation will impress the heathen (Peake). But grace is only one side of the problem in talk. There must be "salt" also, "seasoned with salt." It is "sense" that Paul means by "salt." The ancients (Cicero, Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom) used "salt" as a symbol for wit like the "Attic salt." But this witty use of salt easily degenerated into "salacious" or "salty" in a bad sense or at least *double entendre*. That is not the sense in which Paul employs the word here. There was talk of that kind in plenty as Paul explains in Eph. 5:4. Paul means wise talk by "seasoned with salt." Conversation and sermons must be opportune in time, theme, and appropriate to the persons involved if good is to be

[7] ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἅλατι ἠρτυμένος. Supply ἔστω. Note tense ἠρτυμένος.

done, if the opportunity is to be bought up when it comes. Once after a somewhat formal dinner, when a number of rather distinguished persons were present, Dr. F. B. Meyer of London said to me that we had had worthy talk. I have never forgotten that remark of the famous preacher. He had helped to make the talk worthy and all went away with that feeling. The opportunity had not been wasted. It is not necessary for sermons to be dull. They do not need to be vulgar and salacious to have the spice and wit and salt that Paul has in mind here. Sermons do not have to be dull to be spiritual and wholesome. The sparkle and stimulus of real wit and wisdom may flash in sermon as in conversation. One can be spicy, pleasing, winsome, sparkling, even brilliant in conversation without being coarse. "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29). Pure and wholesome talk can be bright and clever in repartee, in pure wit that does not hurt or leave a sting. Paul tried to be all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22), but within limits most assuredly. It is inconceivable that Paul would stoop to enjoy smutty jokes in any company merely by reason of wit. Salt that has lost its flavor is the most worthless of all things (Mark 9:49f.). If Christians are to be the salt of the earth in the preservative sense, as Jesus said they are (Matt. 5:13), they must retain the antiseptic powers of pure salt and not be contaminated by a vile environment.

"That you may know how you must answer each one."[8] Plutarch insisted on both grace and salt in pub-

[8] εἰδέναι πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ἑνὶ ἑκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι. Infinitive of purpose again in εἰδέναι.

lic speech, charm and wit, he meant. But he was leagues away from the idea of Paul here. Paul wishes that the Colossians may know how to answer the Gnostics in their disputes as well as how to win people to Christ by means of grace and "gumption." It is a rare gift, but a needed one. "Not only must your conversation be opportune as regards the time; it must also be appropriate as regards the person" (Lightfoot). Sometimes, alas, we make it *mal-à-propos* both as to time and person, not to say topic also. In 1 Pet. 3:15 there are wise words concerning the use of replying to the inquiries made or the objections raised. One may do well to study Paul's own answers and discourses in Philippi, at Athens, in Jerusalem before Felix and Festus (Agrippa), and in Rome. He was conciliatory, but firm, compromising no principle and loyal to the Lord Jesus. A teacher is often puzzled how to answer the questions that some students put to him, hobby questions, side issues to evade the lessons, minor matters that detract from the main point. Surely there are few things that call for more patience and skill than the asking and answering of questions. Often the teacher and the student do not understand the use of words by each other. Socrates was a master in the use of questions to bring out the truth. There are people who are always ready to trip one, if they can, by some insoluble or unimportant problem. Wisdom is surely called for both in the asking and the answering of questions in public and in private. "It is better for most of us to fish with the rod than with the net, to angle for single souls, rather than to try and enclose a multitude at once. Preaching to a congregation has

its own place and value; but private and personal talk, honestly and wisely done, will effect more than the most eloquent preaching" (Maclaren). And Alexander Maclaren was one of the greatest preachers of all time.

3. *Kind Words about Tychicus and Onesimus, the Bearers of the Epistle.* 7–9.

"Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-slave in the Lord, will tell you all things about me."[9] Tychicus is a native of proconsular Asia (Acts 20:4), possibly from Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). He was with Paul four times, once on the way to Jerusalem during the close of the third missionary journey (Acts 20:4), in Rome as here when he is writing this Epistle, once again apparently when he wrote to Titus in Crete before sent to Crete (Tit. 3:12), and apparently again in Rome the last time before sent to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). Probably Tychicus was one of the delegates appointed by his own church to accompany Paul with the collection (1 Cor. 16:3f.), and apparently he went all the way to Jerusalem like Trophimus (Acts 21:29), for the words "as far as Asia" are not genuine in Acts 20:4. Lightfoot thinks that he is the brother whose praise in the gospel is in all the churches (2 Cor. 8:18). The name appears in the inscriptions, both Tychicus and Onesimus in Phrygian inscriptions at Altentash. He describes him also in Eph. 6:21. He is a brother beloved by the Christian brotherhood, a

[9] *τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ πάντα γνωρίσει ὑμῖν Τύχικος ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἀδελφὸς καὶ πιστὸς διάκονος καὶ σύνδουλος ἐν κυρίῳ.* Note the use of *κατ'* rather than *περὶ*. Observe the one article with the three substantives in apposition with *Τύχικος*. Note the accent *Τύχικος*, not *Τυχικός*. *ἐν κυρίῳ* probably goes with all three substantives.

faithful minister in his missionary activities, and a fellow-slave with Paul in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ellicott). In Phil. 1:12 Paul has the same phrase for "all that relates to me" as Luke has it also in Acts 25:14 "the matters relating to Paul." What Paul means is that Tychicus will supplement the Epistle with more details and at greater length. Paul does not mean to say that Tychicus is a "deacon" in the technical sense seen in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8, 12. He is a minister, faithful to Christ and also to Paul. He is really an authorized personal representative of Paul on this mission to churches of Asia and to the Lycus Valley in particular. He is the bearer also of the letter to the Ephesians (Laodiceans) as stated in Eph. 6:21. Personal letters had to be sent by special and responsible carriers. The Roman government had its own postal system for official business. One of the greatest blessings of modern civilization is the cheap postal system whereby for a few cents one is able to post a letter to the uttermost parts of the world with the confident assurance that it will be safely delivered. Paul has the utmost confidence in Tychicus as he had in Phœbe (Rom. 16:1) and it was not misplaced in either instance.

"Whom I have sent to you for this very purpose that you may know the things concerning us and that he may strengthen your hearts."[10] He is sending him

[10] ὃν ἔπεμψα πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἵνα γνῶτε τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν καὶ παρακαλέσῃ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν. Note the epistolary aorist ἔπεμψα and the neat idiom εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο (Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:6; 2 Pet. 1:5). γνῶτε is the correct text (ℵ* A B D), not γνῷ (Textus Receptus). Cf. Eph. 6:21 εἰδῆτε. παρακαλέσῃ means here strengthen, encourage, cheer, comfort in the old sense of the word. A scribe probably changed γνῶτε to γνῷ to agree with παρακαλέσῃ.

now with this letter, but, when they read it, he will already be there. This is a common idiom (epistolary aorist) in all letters. We have it in Gal. 6:11 and often in spite of the denial of some scholars that Paul employed it. The Colossians do not need consolation, but courage to stand against the wiles of the Gnostics and to be faithful to Christ and to the gospel message. Tychicus will also relieve the anxiety of the Colossians concerning his own welfare as a prisoner of Christ in Rome.

"Together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you."[11] Onesimus went along with Tychicus and bore the Epistle to Philemon who lived in Colossae and whose slave Onesimus still was. It is a wonderful story of the redemption of this runaway slave whom he is now sending back to Philemon, but with a skilful and irresistible plea for the freedom of Onesimus and treatment as a brother beloved in Christ and friend of Paul. He is here boldly bracketed by Paul with Tychicus and is delicately described as "one of you" and also as "the faithful and beloved brother," language of the same flavor as that employed about Tychicus in Col. 4:7 and Eph. 6:21. There is no allusion here to the fact of the slavery of Onesimus nor to his escape to Rome, but the dignified and courteous description of a brother whom Paul has won to Christ and whom he has taken to his heart. These brave words of Paul would compel Philemon and the other members of the Colossian church to think twice before they refused to give the glad hand of full fellowship to Onesimus, the returned runaway slave, now

[11] *σὺν Ὀνησίμῳ τῷ πιστῷ καὶ ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ, ὅς ἐστιν ἐξ ὑμῶν.*

a brother in Christ. It is thus that Paul indirectly seeks to undermine the institution of slavery which in the end will be overthrown by the explosive power of the love of Christ. "Think of him as he left Colossae, shrinking from his master, with stolen property in his bosom, madness and mutiny in his heart, an ignorant heathen, with vices and sensualities holding carnival in his soul. Think of him as he came back, Paul's trusted representative, with desires after holiness in his deepest nature, the light of the knowledge of a loving and pure God in his soul, a great hope before him, ready for all service and even to put on again the abhorred yoke!" (Maclaren). So these two messengers are linked together here with Paul's love as they speed across sea and land to Colossae with this bundle of three letters. Maclaren indulges his sanctified imagination with the wonder that would seize Tychicus if he had been told "that these bits of parchment would outlast all the ostentatious pomp of the city, and that his name, because written in them, would be known to the end of time all over the world." Colossae has vanished from the earth, but the names of Tychicus and Onesimus are known and loved wherever the name of Jesus has won power with men.

"They will make known to you all the things here."[12] Paul assumes that the Colossians will desire to know all about Christian conditions in Rome (see Phil. 1 and 4). He leaves most of that story for Tychicus and Onesimus to tell, certain that they would do it wisely.

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[12] *πάντα ὑμῖν γνωρίσουσιν τὰ ὧδε.* The form *γνωριοῦσιν* has some support. The so-called Attic future in Paul's writings is usually in quotations from the LXX.

4. *Greetings from Paul's Companions in Rome.* 10–14.

Paul has a choice circle of friends with him in Rome who wish to send their greetings to the saints in Colossae. He loved his friends and he had them everywhere.

"Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner salutes you."[13] He was a Macedonian of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4) who was with Paul in Ephesus and was seized along with Gaius by the mob and carried to the amphitheater (Acts 19:29). He was one of the church delegates from Thessalonica to go with Paul and the collection from Greece and Macedonia to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He started from Cæsarea on the voyage to Rome (Acts 27:2). Lightfoot thinks that Aristarchus left Paul at Myra and went on back to Thessalonica. There is no way of determining that, but if so, he came on later to Cæsarea (Acts 27:2) and to Rome where he is now with Paul when he writes to the Colossians. Paul describes him here as "my fellow-prisoner." Does he use this term in a literal or in a figurative sense? In Philemon 23 Paul calls Epaphras "my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus," employing the same word. In Rom. 16:7 he terms Andronicus and Junias "my kinsmen and fellow-prisoners." Strictly speaking the word means a captive taken in war, while Paul himself was not actually a prisoner of war, though a prisoner of Rome. In Rom. 7:23 Paul clearly refers to captivity to sin by the word as in 2 Cor. 10:5 he brings his thoughts into captivity to Christ. In Eph.

[13] Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἀρίσταρχος ὁ συναιχμάλωτος μου. Paul is very fond of compounds with συν-.

4:8 Paul quotes the passage about Christ leading captivity captive. Curiously enough in Philemon 23 Aristarchus is simply called one of Paul's "co-workers." Ellicott suggests that both Aristarchus and Epaphras voluntarily became prisoners with Paul and exchanged places, or that an actual trial set one of them free. And yet Paul used military terms for service to Christ (Phil. 2:25; Philemon 2; 2 Tim. 2:3). That may be all that he means here concerning himself and Aristarchus.

"And Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you received commandments; if he come to you, receive him)."[14] "There is no reason to suppose that St. Paul could or would have used it in any other than its proper sense of 'cousin'" (Lightfoot). John Mark first appears in Acts 12: 12, 25 as the son of Mary who accompanied Barnabas and Saul from Jerusalem to Antioch. Barnabas took him along on the first mission tour from Antioch as a sort of "attendant" (Acts 13:5), but he deserted the campaign at Perga (Acts 13:13) and returned to Jerusalem. He reappears at Antioch when Barnabas proposes to Paul that in the second tour they take along John Mark, his cousin, as Paul tells us here. But Paul would not condone his defection at Perga and so Barnabas and Paul parted company over John Mark, who went off to Cyprus with Barnabas (Acts 15:37–39). He was later with Simon Peter either in Babylon or Rome (1 Pet. 5:13), whether before this time or afterward. But Paul has

[14] καὶ Μάρκος ὁ ἀνεψιὸς βαρνάβα (περὶ οὗ ἐλάβατε ἐντολάς, ἐὰν ἔλθῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς δέξασθε αὐτόν. Pollux (iii. 28) explains ἀνεψιὸς to mean cousin, not nephew (late usage). Note genitive βαρνάβα. Parenthesis here necessary to make relation plain to us. Condition of third class, ἐὰν ἔλθῃ. Note change from indirect to direct discourse.

already changed his opinion of Mark because he has made good and has become useful for ministry, so useful that Paul longs for him with Timothy in his last imprisonment in Rome (2 Tim. 4:11). It is clear that the same man is meant in all these passages. Whether Mark had written his Gospel and had it with him in Rome, we do not know.

The thing is quite possible in itself for he wrote it under the influence of Simon Peter. If so, that fact had its bearing on Paul's own estimate of John Mark. And did Peter come to Rome before Paul left after writing these epistles? It is always a noble thing to change a depreciatory opinion to a higher one when it is made possible, and Paul could do that. There is no evidence of any lingering bitterness towards Barnabas by reason of the sharp dispute at Antioch when the word hypocrisy was used by Paul about both Peter and Barnabas (Gal. 2:12–14). Both had clearly long ago come back to Paul's position. Whether Barnabas was still alive or not we do not know. Paul had sent injunctions already to the Colossians about the reception of Mark, in case he visited the Lycus Valley as he evidently planned, a little glimpse into the active mission work going on now all over the Roman Empire. These instructions may have been by letter or by messenger. "The natural inference is, that they were sent by St. Paul himself, and not by any one else" (Lightfoot). The word for "receive" is the "regular term for hospitable reception" (Abbott), as in Matt. 10:14; Luke 9:48; 10:38; John 4:45.

"And Jesus who is called Justus."[15] This brother

[15] καὶ Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰοῦστος. Latin name Justus.

is not mentioned elsewhere, though the surname Justus is given to Joseph Barsabbas (Acts 1:23) and a proselyte at Corinth (Acts 18:7). The name is common enough among the Jews. The Greek equivalent "the Just" (or Righteous) was the epithet applied to the brother of Jesus, viz., James the Just. Jesus is also a common name as is seen in Josephus. Zahn argues that the mention of Jesus Justus here in addition to the names in Philemon 23f. favors the genuineness of Colossians.

"Those who are of the circumcision, these alone are co-workers for the Kingdom of God, men who proved an encouragement to me."[16] The punctuation is doubtful, but Paul means to describe Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus Justus as converts from Judaism and as the only Jewish Christians in Rome of any prominence who have stood by him as co-workers and so an encouragement to him. One has only to recall the activity of the Judaizers in Rome against Paul to appreciate the force of this compliment to the three loyal brethren. The venom of these Judaizers is alluded to in Phil. 1:15–20. Timothy's loyalty shone by its very loneliness, but he was only half Jew at first.

"Epaphras, who is one of you, salutes you, a slave of Christ Jesus, always contending for you in his prayers, that you may stand fast, perfect and fully

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[16] οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς, οὗτοι μόνοι συνεργοὶ εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, οἵτινες ἐγενήθησάν μοι παρηγορία. Note ἐκ, εἰς, οἵτινες. The word παρηγορία (from παρηγορέω) is that from which we get our word paregoric. The Greek used it as a medical term, a soothing soporific.

assured in all the will of God."[17] The full name would be Epaphroditus, but not the one from Philippi in Rome when Paul wrote Philippians. Paul usually calls himself "a slave of Christ." He applies it once to Timothy also (Phil. 1:1) and here to Epaphras. In Rom. 15:30 he asks the Roman Christians to wrestle with him in prayer, and Luke (22:44) applies the term "agony" to Christ's prayer in Gethsemane. The perfection that Paul means is not an easy self-confidence, but rests upon full persuasion in all the will of God. This is the idea of the verb here as in Rom. 4:21 rather than to fulfill as in 2 Tim. 4:5. Epaphras evidently took the Gnostic peril seriously and was wrestling with God constantly that they might stand firm against the wiles of these plausible deceivers. Meanwhile he was appealing to Paul also to help him get the answer to his prayers. This confidence rests "in everything willed by God" which is more exact than "in all the will of God."

"For I bear witness to him that he has much toil in your behalf and for those in Laodicea and for those in Hierapolis."[18] Epaphras is familiar with conditions in the three cities of the Lycus Valley and is deeply con-

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[17] *ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ ἐξ ὑμῶν, δοῦλος χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, πάντοτε ἀγωνιζόμενος ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς, ἵνα σταθῆτε τέλειοι καὶ πεπληρωμένοι ἐν παντὶ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ.* Note strong word *ἀγωνιζόμενος*, wrestling as in 1:29. The idiom *ὁ ἐξ ὑμῶν* is common (Col. 4:9; Acts 4:6; 21:8; Rom. 16:10, 11; 1 Cor. 12:16; Phil. 4:22). *σταθῆτε* is the correct text, not *στῆτε*. The word *τέλειοι* means perfect, of course, standing fast is standing perfect. Note perfect tense of the participle.

[18] *μαρτυρῶ γὰρ αὐτῷ ὅτι ἔχει πολὺν πόνον ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικίᾳ καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἱερᾷ Πόλει. πόνον* is correct here rather than either *ζῆλον* or *κόπον*. It is nowhere else in the N. T. except Rev. 16:10, 11; 21:4. Cf. *ἀγῶνα* in Col. 2:1.

cerned that the Gnostics do not play havoc with them. He may have evangelized Laodicea and Hierapolis as well as Colossae. Laodicea and Hierapolis were on opposite sides of the Valley about six miles apart and about twelve miles from Colossae. Paul repeats his testimony to the eagerness of Epaphras about their loyalty to Christ. He uses every ounce of influence that Epaphras has with them.

"Luke the beloved physician salutes you and Demas."[19] The name occurs only here in the New Testament and Philemon 24 and 2 Tim. 4:11, apart from the titles to the Gospel and the Acts. Abbott finds it interesting that both Mark and Luke, writers of two of the Gospels, are here with Paul at the same time. Probably both had already written their Gospels and Paul may have seen them ere now. They are mentioned together also in Philemon 24 and in 2 Tim. 4:11. Paul is manifestly fond of Luke, his physician and friend. It is quite possible that "St. Paul's motive in specifying him as the physician may not have been to distinguish him from any other bearing the same name, but to emphasize his own obligations to his medical knowledge" (Lightfoot). It is quite likely also that Luke's first connection with Paul at Troas may have been in a professional capacity. He was a Gentile, probably a Greek, and a man of culture, possibly a student of the University of Tarsus. Paul and Luke suggest the fellowship of the preacher and the phy-

[19] ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Λουκᾶς ὁ ἰατρὸς ὁ ἀγαπητὸς καὶ Δημᾶς. The form Λουκᾶς is a shortened form of Λουκανός and appears also as Λούκιος. But he is a different man from Lucius the Cyrenian of Acts 13:1.

sician today in treating the souls and bodies of men. They ought to be co-workers and friends. Luke makes Paul his hero in the latter half of the Acts. Demas may be a contraction from Demetrius. He is mentioned here without a word of commendation. He appears in close connection with Luke in Philemon 24, but in 2 Tim. 4:10 they act very differently. There Luke is constantly with Paul in his hour of danger and death, while Demas has forsaken Paul and has become a deserter. Perhaps this fateful outcome is already foreshadowed by Paul's guarded language about Demas here in Col. 4:14. It is sad to see a man break down at the end.

5. *Closing Directions for Colossae and Laodicea.* 15–17.

"Salute the brethren in Laodicea and Nympha and the church in her house."[20] The text is difficult, but it is probably as given above. If "their" is read, then the church would be in the house of the brethren in Laodicea. Were there two churches in Laodicea? Lightfoot suggests that there was a family of Colossians that had settled in Laodicea. It was common enough for the church to meet in a private home since there were as yet no separate houses of worship for the churches. The church in Jerusalem met in the house of Mary (Acts 12:12), at Philippi in the house of Lydia (Acts 16:40), at Ephesus in the house of Aquila

[20] Ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐν Λαοδικίᾳ ἀδελφοὺς καὶ Νύμφαν καὶ τὴν κατ' οἶκον αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίαν. The correct form is Νύμφαν (feminine), not Νυμφᾶν (masculine). αὐτῆς is also correct, not αὐτῶν nor αὐτοῦ. Lightfoot argues for αὐτῶν as the origin of the other two. Abbott argues for αὐτοῦ. Westcott and Hort hold to αὐτῆς.

and Priscilla (1 Cor. 16:19) and later in Rome (Rom. 16:5), and likewise there was the church that met in the house of Philemon in Colossae apparently (Philemon 2). The homes surely received a special blessing from that service. There was responsibility also.

"And when the epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you also read the one from Laodicea."[21] This interchange of letters to nearby churches is most interesting. The letter to the Colossians was evidently meant to be read in the public assembly. Then it was to be sent, or probably a copy of it made and sent to the church in Laodicea. In 1 Thess. 5:27 Paul gave directions that the Epistle be read to all the brethren. The language in 2 Cor. 1:1 implies that the epistle likewise will be copied and sent to all the saints in all Achaia. Lightfoot thinks that these salutations are in the nature of a postscript like that of Tertius in Rom. 16:22. We do not know who the amanuensis was for Paul in the Epistle to the Colossians, but, as in 2 Cor. 3:14, Paul means for the Epistle to be read publicly for the benefit of all as we have seen in 1 Thess. 5:27. By "the letter from Laodicea" Paul means the one left there and a copy to be made and sent to you. A great deal of discussion has arisen concerning this Epistle. If it is a special letter and to Laodicea alone, we do not have it now. There is in Latin a so-called Epistle

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[21] *καὶ ὅταν ἀναγνωσθῇ παρ' ὑμῖν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ποιήσατε ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ Λαοδικέων ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀναγνωσθῇ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικίας ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀναγνῶτε.* Indefinite temporal clause with *ὅταν* and aorist passive subjunctive. This use of *ποιήσατε ἵνα* is like the Latin idiom *fac ut*. Note the prolepsis of *τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικίας*. Note also the double use of *καὶ* answering to each other.

to the Laodiceans which was accepted in England by some in the twelfth century, and which appeared in some early English Bibles. It is a mere Mosaic of Pauline phrases from Philippians. Marcion called our Ephesians the Epistle to the Laodiceans. This view is taken by Rutherfurd in his *St. Paul's Epistles to Colossae and Laodicea.* The absence of "in Ephesus" in Aleph and B in Eph. 1:1 lends color also to this view, as does the absence of personal items at the close of Ephesians though Paul preached some three years in Ephesus. This probable interpretation harmonizes with what Paul says here. He sent a general Epistle (our Ephesians) along with the Epistle to the Colossians. A copy went to Laodicea, to Colossae, Hierapolis, to Ephesus. Probably the original copy had the name of no city which was inserted by each city as it wished. Aleph and B preserve the original form with no name. Most manuscripts give the form from the copy in Ephesus. This view is probably correct and explains all the interesting phenomena.

"And say to Archippus: See to the ministry that you received from the Lord, that you fill it full." [22] Archippus is called a fellow-soldier by Paul in Philemon 2. He is probably a son of Philemon. Lightfoot thinks that he resided at Laodicea, and hence the church at Colossae is urged to pass on to Archippus this charge. He had received his commission, whether as pastor or evangelist, "in the Lord" and so the service must be rendered. But he had best keep an eye on his ministry

[22] καὶ εἴπατε Ἀρχίππῳ Βλέπε τὴν διακονίαν ἣν παρέλαβες ἐν κυρίῳ, ἵνα αὐτὴν πληροῖς. Note the tense of πληροῖς. Fulfill is to fill full. Note the subjunctive form πληροῖς.

that "you keep on filling it full." That is the kind of service that every young minister should render. It is a beautiful thing to see a young preacher grow as his church grows. It will grow if he fills his ministry full with love and work and keeps on filling it fuller all the while. Paul laid a similar charge on Timothy: "Fulfil thy ministry"[23] (2 Tim. 4:5). Paul's interest in young preachers is perennial and profound.

6. *Paul's Signature.* 18.

Paul ceased dictating words and took the pen in his own hand. He had poured out his heart to the Colossians in order to break the spell of the Gnostic Intellectuals over them. If Paul were living now, he would be all ablaze as men today seek to mislead the youth of our day away from the moorings of faith and morals by pseudo-scientific agnosticism and atheism. They try to get rid of God, the soul of man, the conscience, by confining all our inward aspirations to animal instincts, mechanistic behaviorism, psycho-analysis, auto-suggestion, anything, everything that will leave man a mere beast or make him so. Paul saw the chasm that yawned before the Colossian believers as these deceivers spread their wares before the cities in the Lycus Valley. The licentious wing broke down all moral responsibility and distinctions. Paul called the minds of men back to Christ in words that blaze and burn today. He wrote his own signature: "The salutation of Paul in my own hand."[24] This was his habit as we see from 2 Thess.

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[23] *τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον.*

[24] *ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ Παύλου.* Note genitive **Παύλου** in apposition with the possessive pronoun *ἐμῇ*.

3:17; 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11. If the original copy with Paul's own autograph should be found, no manuscript on earth would compare with it in value. Recently on Lee's birthday a copy of his last orders to his men at Appomattox that they surrender to Grant and disband was published in *The Courier Journal* of Jan. 19, 1928. It was signed by Lee in his own well-known handwriting. A value of twenty-five thousand dollars was placed by experts on that document.

Paul has a last word: "Remember my bonds. Grace be with you."[25] As he wrote his signature the chain on his right hand came afresh to his notice. "When we read of his 'chains' we should not forget that they moved over the paper as he wrote. His hand was chained to the soldier that kept him" (Alford). The same appeal is made in Eph. 3:1 and 4:1 and 6:20. In Gal. 6:17 Paul made a plea that he be heard by reason of the "marks" on his own body, brands for the sake of Christ and proof of his ownership by Christ. Here he could probably not go on for the hand of the Roman soldier jerked him away. But Paul wrote his heart's blood into this sentence and it is there yet. The short benediction here is like that in 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22 (last of all). He adds "grace" always, but usually with the words "of our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no richer word than the word "grace" for it carries in it all of God's love as seen in the gift of his Son for us.

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[25] *μνημονεύετέ μου τῶν δεσμῶν. ἡ χάρις μεθ' ὑμῶν.* One must supply the copula *ἔστω*.

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